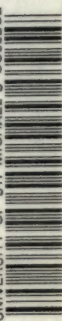
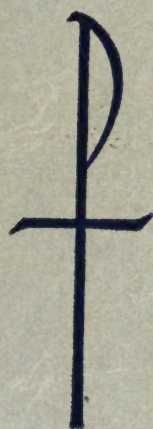


UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



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MEDITATIONS

ON THE

SACRAMENTS

Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R.





MEDITATIONS
on
THE SACRAMENTS AND CHRISTIAN LIFE
for
Priests and Seminarians

by
REV. BERNARD HARING, C.S.S.R.

Since Father Haring has been at GUEST HOUSE and spoken to the patients, he knows first-hand of the wonderful work being accomplished there. Father Haring's permission for the publication of these notes was given with the understanding that GUEST HOUSE would receive all proceeds. It is hoped, therefore, that these meditations will be of benefit both to you and to GUEST HOUSE.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The meditations collected in this volume were presented by Father Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R. to seminarians of the American College at Louvain, Belgium during the retreat of 1964. With the permission of Fr. Haring a group of seminarians at the College have edited the present volume. Several points should be noted in regard to this edition.

Fr. Bernard Haring, although granting permission for the publication of his meditations in mimeographed form, has not reviewed the edited work before publication. The meditations were taken informally by the editor during their presentation and checked by means of recordings. All means were taken to achieve accuracy and completeness. However, any possible inaccuracies or errors must be attributed solely to the editor and not to their author.

Editing was necessary to render the conferences into a readable form. No attempt, however, has been made to achieve a polished literary style. A sole motive in editing was simply to present these meditations in a style sufficient for a grasping of the contents.

These meditations were delivered during Holy Week and those reading them should take this into consideration. Often the choice of topic for a particular meditation was made in light of the liturgy. For example, the meditation on Holy Orders was presented on Holy Thursday; mortification and penance on Good Friday. An awareness of this fact will enrich the reading of this volume.

The question conferences followed the meditations each day and the reader is strongly urged not to read them unless he has first read the meditations themselves. They cannot be isolated from the text if a full understanding of their contents is to be grasped.

It must be emphasized that these meditations cannot be used except for private and personal reflection. This volume should be considered as copyrighted.

Explicit permission in writing was obtained from Fr. Haring for this particular publication. We must, therefore, state that these notes may not be reprinted.

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Meditation I

CHRIST AND THE SACRAMENTS

"After John had been imprisoned, Jesus returned to Galilee to preach God's Good Message. This was his theme: 'The time of waiting is over, the kingdom of God is close at hand. Change your evil ways; believe in the Good Message.'"

Mark 1:14-16

I have chosen as the theme of this meditation the summary of the teaching of Our Lord as given by St. Mark. Generally the biblical scholars agree that Mark didn't wish to express how Christ began to teach. Indeed the first preaching of Our Lord was longer, not just three phrases. Mark wishes to give a whole summary. He wished to show the very structure of the preaching of Our Lord. This is the program of the teaching of Our Lord and it should be the program for this retreat.

Jesus began to proclaim the Good Tidings. It is Good Tidings, the Good News, and why? Above all because it is Jesus. "Salvator Mundi", salvation. It is Jesus, the Only-Begotten Son. In the same chapter of St. Mark is contained the baptism of Christ. There the heavens opened and a voice came from heaven: "This is My Beloved Son". The Father proclaims from heaven it is My Son, My Beloved to whom you shall listen. So in the text it is clear what is the essence or heart of the message of the Gospel--it is not some messenger, prophet, patriarch or preacher, it is the Word of God, the Beloved Son of the Father. It is the Word that has made the world, it is the Word-made-Man, it is this Blissful Word to whom the Father from all eternity has given all his wisdom, power, and love. It is the Word in which the Father expresses His beatitude, and this is the Gospel coming from God. As better texts say: "Jesus begins to preach the Gospel coming from God." It is the Word Himself, the Son, Who comes. How wonderful were the words of Pope Paul at the beginning of the second session of the Vatican Council: "per Christum solum Dominum"; that the Church in the council will not bring another message to the world but Christ. He is the messenger, but not a messenger as a prophet bringing a message of future times or a message beyond himself. Here we have a messenger Who is Himself the message, beatitude, and salvation.

The first attitude, therefore, dear friends, in our whole Christian life and especially during these days of retreat is to listen to Christ and not to watch and to judge the retreat master. "Oculi mei semper ad Dominum". We should be aware that it is still the Lord who brings the Good Tidings, as the Constitution on the Liturgy says, "in ecclesiae Christus adhuc praedicat." The Church

still preaches the Gospel. Christ, who is the Word of the Father, is himself preaching the Good Tidings in the Church. This is the Word in whom the Father is expressing the blissful love of all eternity. He is the Word of the Father given us in the Incarnation, Passion, and Death. We have won everything! The great gain in the Christian life is to see the Word of the Father in all things.

The center of this retreat will be the sacraments. We will conceive them as the Fathers of the Church did, and as the new liturgy decree says, "verba Verbi". We will not express them as many people do in considering the mass and the sacraments as a gas station. They run in to get gas for one week, then they can run their life. We will consider the sacraments in their fullness. They are the power to transform our life, but we must first consider them as "verba Verbi". Christ Himself in His powerful presence preaches and brings the Good Tidings to us. It is not just a 2000 year old message coming from afar. It is the Lord Himself speaking to us within the Church in the power of His death and resurrection. The church is first of all, as the Constitution on the Church says, "the fundamental sacrament", the great sign, the great Word of Love that continues the message of Christ, where Christ Himself preaches His Gospel.

Listen to him. Go to him often in the Blessed Sacrament. I was reading the diary of Pope John last week which transcribed what he wrote from his earlier days concerning his purposes and his examination of conscience. Already, as a seminarian of 17 years he was very strong in this purpose: to make two visits to the Blessed Sacrament every day. He kept it very faithfully. Every time he missed making his visits, he would write down why. Once when he missed he wrote down, "you must be stronger. If you do not do better next week, then next Friday you will not eat until the afternoon and then you will do two hours of meditation." It was from his youth that he learned to listen to Christ. This made him one of the greatest messengers of Christ. It was then also while only 17 years old that he understood the Christian unity must occupy first place in all his prayer. Listening to Christ we too learn this great prayer of Christ (Jn. 17).

Philosophy, three years of it, then theology can sometimes create an inaptitude for listening to the Word of God. This inaptitude consists in having acquired an analytical attitude only, i.e., questioning how things are, what they are, matter, concepts, predicaments, instead of seeing that it is Christ, the Word of the Father, who speaks to us. The truths of salvation tell us that Jesus means salvation. Faith, and the true study of theology are present when one is explicitly and consciously aware that he is listening to the Word of the Father, the Word Incarnate.

Coming from God, Christ began to proclaim the good Tidings. Now in a short outline the evangelist shows us how Christ summed up his whole preaching: the time is fulfilled! In the Greek language "chairoi" is very different from "chronos" which means running time, the time indicated by our watch. Even before revelation in the ancient Greek, "chairoi" denoted a favorite moment prepared by God never to return. This concept plays a very great role and is filled with meaning in the New Testament. The favorite moment has come, that moment of greatness, of the plenitude and fullness prepared by the whole history of the world by the million and millions of years, prepared by all deeds of salvation from Adam until now.

In the Gospel of John especially, but also in the Synoptics, it is mentioned that the Lord is waiting for his "hour", his "chairoi". He says to His brethren who are not spiritual men, "My time has not yet come". He is watching; listening: He doesn't plan everything himself independently, as he didn't come to do His own will. His whole life is this openness to the hour prepared by God running to the hour of his death. He shows perfectly that he seeks neither his own glory nor his own will. Thus do we have to learn to use the time prepared by God. Because these days are prepared for you by God in His love and wisdom, the power of the Lord's first coming is present in them for you. They are filled by the great hour of the death and the passion of our Lord. It is his death, his passion. It is the power of his resurrection that comes to you and urges you to use these days to open your hearts, to be watchful, to be ready. Listen to the Lord, what His will is for your vocation, for your life; what has to be changed, to be deepened. Listen to Him and do not waste the grace of God, the hour of grace. No hour of grace will return, for it challenges us in the now. God determines grace, not man. If man tries to dispose of his life alone, it will be sterile. If man thinks he can make his own plans, thinks he can say, "I'll do it later on", he is lost. Man must be watchful and depend on the grace of God. Because we are living in the time of grace, vigilance is one of the eschatological virtues. God is ruling and guiding us in His love and we must be watchful in prayer, watchful for the Word of God. This time is not that time of the clock, but the sign of the "chairoi", that we may learn from divine providence. Watch the depth of your soul; what God tells you.

You can be sure that this retreat will be very decisive for your life, for your death, and for the Church of God. If you use it with the grace of God, if you are watchful, if you are docile and ready to say from a deeper interiority, here I am, "ecce adsum", then you will prepare yourself for a still greater and as an instrument of salvation.

The time is fulfilled! The kingdom is at hand! We had a great discussion upon the meaning of the kingdom of God in the preparatory theological commission for the Council. Some bishops thought it meant the Church as an organization, but that was very legal-

istic. Not a human organization, but God brings salvation. It is God in his love and his grace reigning over men. The Church is not the kingdom of God simpliciter. It is a sacrament, an efficacious sign of the kingdom of God. As "ancilla Domini" the Blessed Virgin is the prototype of the Church. In her obedience and watchfulness and her humility she is this prototype. The Church is not proclaiming her own glory, dominion and power, for then it would falsify the kingdom of God. The Church first submits herself to Christ as Christ did to the will of the Father. The kingdom of God means primacy of grace, that one accepts the gifts of God as the expression of the loving will of God. One accepts these gifts as the norm of his life. One is still a slave and not yet a son of the free maid of the Church, of the mother of the Lord, if he only accepts the external law, the letter of the law. He is still a son of that slavemaids. One is living as a Christian in the great epoch of salvation and the time of fullness if he wholeheartedly accepts the graces of God. I will often repeat it, it should be the central motive of these days as it is of the celebration of the Mass "What shall I render to God for whatever he gave me". This is the expression of the law of grace, already expressed by the psalmist, but even more by Christ. You shall realize that, in accepting the kingdom of God, one is not ruled as a slave asking whether something must or must not be done under pain of mortal or venial sin, but rather one asks himself what he can render God for all He has given him. One lets himself be guided by the Spirit, by the grace of God, by all the natural and supernatural gifts of God!

The sacraments proclaim this rule to us. First, there is the "opus operatum", the work of God, the powerful grace of God. We receive this properly if we open ourselves to this work, if we are ready to live in accordance with the message brought by the gifts of God in the sacraments, transforming the natural gifts of creation. The kingdom of God is at hand. It is the primacy of grace, but the kingdom of God means that this love is gathering, bringing together. Whoever is led by the Spirit is a living member of the family of God. It is the sign of spiritual men that they live in community, and that they are docile to Mother-Church; not only docile but watchful as well to the needs of other members of the Church. To sum up, the sacraments proclaim the kingdom of God, the primacy of grace and the powerful gathering of men by the Spirit of God in the community of salvation.

We try to learn ever more how we can express now, in these years of the seminary, the attitude not only of docility to God, but also the attitude of watchfulness and charity towards one's neighbor. Some seminarians are dreaming of what tremendous apostles they will be, and at the same time are neglecting the present hour, the present chances in the seminary to help others to become saintly priests. If you have this sense of responsibility to create the atmosphere of sanctity in these seminarians, you are doing more than you will do in your whole life. If the result is

mediocrity, there will be many priests who are good citizens of the world, but not saints. Now must you see the challenging call of the kingdom of God to create this atmosphere of faith, hope, charity and adoration of God in this place where God has called you. I think it would be one of the greatest meditations of this retreat to see what you can do now, here in 1964, at the American College, to help your 96 other confreres to become priests and saints. Or else give up your vocation and become a good layman!

This retreat is necessarily a preaching of conversion. I do not think that one of you needs conversion from the darkness of death, mortal sin, to the light of sanctifying grace. But the mere possibility that there may be one among us who has deceived himself, building up his own morality against the law of the Lord and living so in the darkness of mortal sin, necessitates our praying over it. Let us pray, too, for those priests especially who are still celebrating the covenant of the new law, but living in the darkness of mortal sin. Let us also pray for those Christians who are lost in the darkness of mortal sin.

We cannot exclude totally this possibility. It would not be right if we say the possibility is absent. I do not speak to any scrupulous men here! Make a sincere examination conscience to see whether or not your life is similar to the Gospel.

This retreat is Our Lord preaching conversion, but conversion as Good Tidings, for it is good tidings even if one of us were to be in mortal sin. It would be good tidings if the Lord were to invite him to return to Him, to see the joy in heaven, and to be embraced once more by the Heavenly Father. But for all of us, and I hope we are all in grace, it is still the Lord who speaks to us to be converted. You must change your heart and your mind! There is still something to be changed. I received a letter from an American woman who said that she was a saint from her youth, that she didn't have to change anything but that the Church had to change much. If one of you thinks that he needs no further conversion, then I tell you, you need more conversion. If you are a normal man you need conversion. If one accepts the gospel as the rule of life, he realizes how far away he is from its full realization.

We pray the Lord that he may open our hearts and minds not only to see some practical rules, not only to understand some abstract truth, but that we may know Him and the Father who has sent Him. We pray the Lord that we may receive Him in the challenging call of these days. We pray Him that, we may be converted from the poor moralism of the slavemaid, the attitude that asks how to avoid being punished, to accept His gospel. We pray to receive the Gospel, which is the Lord Himself as well as His message with all our heart, so that we may use the present time of grace to its fullness. Amen.

Meditation II

PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS (1)

"It is the real truth when I tell you that, if you make any request of the Father, he will grant it to you in my name. Up to the present you made no requests in my name. Make them, and they will be granted. Thus nothing will be wanting to your joy. Thus far I have spoken to you in figures. A time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you about the Father in plain language. That will be the time when you make requests in my name; and I do not tell you that I shall then petition the Father in your behalf. Of his own accord the Father loves you dearly, because you are settled in your love for me and in your conviction that I come from the Father. I come from the Father and have come into the world. And now I am leaving the world and going home to the Father."

John 16:23-29

In April of 1940, Peter Wolf, one of the greatest Catholic philosophers of Germany, died in Munster. His disciples asked the dying man to give them a last testament, so just before his death he wrote: "If you would ask me if I know something like a magic key that opens up the world of wisdom and science, I would tell you, indeed I know such a key. It is not something you would expect from a philosopher's reflection, it is not an idea in the books. It is prayer."

Prayer opens our heart to the higher wisdom of God. Only a prayer I would say, and this one of the most important ideas, gains admittance to the deepest mysteries of our existence. Only a man of prayer can understand something of what is life with God. Only a man of prayer can have some idea of what are the sacraments, these great mysteries of the children of God. But it is also true that the sacraments tell us what Christian prayer and powerful transformation of our life really means. The sacraments are real foundation of a typically Christian prayer. This will be our meditation for this and next conference, what is prayer in the light of the sacraments?

Cardinal Faulhaber, biblical scholar and one of the greatest preachers of our century, who was one of the most courageous men in the battle against Nazism, said in a sermon: "Prayer means to go towards God. "Like a little child we go to God, sometimes with the burden of sorrow and sin, and sometimes on the wings of perfect

love of God. Prayer means going towards God.

Pious men of different religions always ask, "Can man reach God? Can man, a poor creature, open the conversation?" One of our old Canadian fathers, a missionary in Vietnam, told me that when he was a young priest he started his preaching to these primitive people with the five ways to prove the existence of God. The people said he was a fool! They told him, "You must be foolish! Whoever has doubted the existence of God? Have you ever found a man who needed such proof? He would be a foolish man!" Then they said to him: "The question is, does God listen to our prayer?" We see the same question in the psalms, "does he really look upon us as children?" The great preacher of the Old Testament writes in Ecclesiasticus 5:2 "Remember, if you make words to God, that God is in heaven, thou art in heaven." God is the holy God, so different from us poor creatures and sinners.

We are on earth. There is a deep abyss between God and us. Indeed, when God called Adam in the morning of creation into existence, God then descended, says the text, to walk through Paradise in the fresh evening. It was the very essence of paradise that God walked with men. It is a remarkable thing that not only in Genesis, but also in the first and second chapters of Romans, man was called to adoration, to a prayer life, to call upon God. But Adam hiding looked upon himself, and so lost paradise. All perversions in the world have their origin in that man, who knew the Creator from His works, did not wish to be a man of prayer. Man had lost the language. A great confusion entered into the whole world because man no longer conceived himself as an adorer, as a man of prayer.

This is the blissful message of the Gospel, that the Word in whom we were created became man and spoke to us in our own language. He walked with men, not in the fresh air of the evening of paradise, but on the mountain of Calvary. The height of his prayer was his death. It was the great sign of the love of the Heavenly Father, and the great reply coming from mankind, "Father, into thy hands I commend my soul." In the very heart of history stands the prayer, the dialogue, of the heavenly Father with mankind in His Beloved Son. His answer is in the name of all mankind, united with Christ by faith, united through divine life and love with him, in the name of all mankind who puts all its hope in Him. We can listen as disciples, listen to the Heavenly Father. God opens our mouth so that we can not only listen but can give the answer in the name of His Son.

The great sacrament, the first sacrament, and sign of prayer, is Christ. He is the Word of the Father given to us. He himself is the answer given in our name. All the sacraments are words of the Word Incarnate. All of them give us a new attitude, and power

to listen to God and to answer Him in the name of Jesus Christ. But one can pray in Christ's name only if he becomes the property of Christ. This is the theology of the Old Testament, namely, that one can call upon the name of God if he declares that he is totally the property of God. It was the meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices to say, "I am the property of God." Christ invoked the name of the Father by saying, "My God", by showing with His blood that He is the property of the Father. We can pray in His name if we, like Christ, declare with our blood, with our whole life, that we wish to be the property of God and belong to Him. We are bearing the name of Christ and with Him we can cry "Father".

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy refers to the sacraments as "sacramenta fidei". This means not only that one must have faith as a condition or disposition but also that the sacraments proclaim really and powerfully the good tidings of the love of God. This means they are the great signs of the faith of Mother-Church. Here the Church proves herself to be the handmaid of God in receiving the Word and making her life as the life of the Blessed Virgin, "ecce ancilla Domini".

The celebration of the sacraments of faith are the very heart of the matter of our life of prayer. They indicate to us what prayer is and what the structure of prayer is. First of all they are a listening to the Word of God, to what God tells us. God is leading! Our prayer then does much to bring our wills to God, but it supposes first a listening to God, sincerely and humbly trying to recognize the "chairoi", the real possibilities God offers us, uniting our wills with the will of Christ and the heavenly Father.

The sacraments tell us that our prayer must be constant and trusting. They are created works which inscribe themselves deep into the being of our whole existence, in what we are. They renew our being. The sacraments, especially baptism, confirmation and holy orders, inscribe the name of Christ the high priest with his prayer for the unity of men in our heart. So if we pray we must express this solidarity with Christ. We must know that we do not pray in our own name. For this reason we cannot doubt that the Father will listen to us. As the Lord says, "I do not say that I will ask the Father for you. The Father loves you because you have trusted in Me." Christ says, you have believed me about the Father. This means that you believe not only that He exists and is something, but also that you have faith and trust in Him, putting your whole hope and confidence in Him. We must be very consciously aware in our prayer that we are not going to the Father alone, but that we are associated with Christ's prayer, that the Father loves us. We are adopted sons and so are united with the Only-Begotten beloved Son.

It is a prayer of demand and always at the same time a prayer of gratitude and adoration. The right prayer that demands something is also a prayer of adoration. Twenty-thirty years ago there were some liturgists who had just started to find the world of



liturgy and had wished to diminish the prayer of demand. They proposed simply a prayer of joy and adoration. The liturgical man does not need to demand, they said, because the Father knows what he needs. That is true! The Father does know, but we must give honor to God by declaring that we have put our hope in him and in his Only-Begotten Son. On earth it is a continuous temptation to put confidence in ourselves, as if we could give something to God of ourselves alone, as if we had some wisdom of ourselves...the old temptation of Adam! By the constant prayer of demand we give honor to God. We declare that we hope for everything from His goodness and not from ourselves. The prayer of demand is already an expression of gratitude and adoration.

Prayer must also signify unity. We must pray with such confidence, knowing Christ's prayer is a pledge of divine goodness. Our confidence must be so great that we express our gratitude from the beginning that the Father is listening to us. He knows better than we what we need and he gives better gifts. Sometimes we pray for deliverance from evil in this world, and God wishes to give us a new cross, a new trial. But our confidence must be so great that we give honor to God, and express our gratitude that whatever He gives us is better than our own desires. Thus our prayer is also humble. Our prayer of demand recognizes the Lordship of God, His dominion over life and His kingdom; that He rules by His love with His best gifts.

Our prayer must be humble. Before I preached the retreat to the Holy Father, a mother superior told me that she had to tell the Holy Father that she was the incarnation of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Father was the incarnation of the Holy Spirit. Poor fool, of course! But similar fools are all those who feel that they are rich, who declare, "I thank you that I am not like the rest of men!" The poor fools that wish wisdom of themselves.

Our prayer must be humble! Give honor to God! People must be really aware of their nothingness, that they have nothing that is theirs except their sins. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit because it is for those that God has prepared the kingdom. God shows his goodness in the sacraments, that is, in the death of his Son. And humble prayer must continuously be a prayer of praise as was the prayer of Jesus. "I pray thee Father, Lord of heaven, because thou hast revealed these great things to the humble, the poor ones." From humility, from those who are poor in their spirit, who recognize they have all from God but their sins, comes praise of God.

The sacraments teach us furthermore that our prayer must be very personal and at the same time completely communal. It is in the name of Christ who spoke personally to His Father. It is His personality to be the Word of the Father. But as the Word Incarnate He is the Word given to mankind. He gave his reply with his death on the cross in the name of the whole family of God. He is the great sacrament. He teaches us how our prayer must be: "Father,



Our Father." Our prayer is good if we give ourselves to God with all our special gifts, but if we do it as Christ in the name of the whole family of God. If we consider our own special qualities in order to building up the Mystical Body of Christ, then our prayer is good.

The great danger of our prayer--and you will feel it ever more during your life--is formalism. It comes during Mass and during the recitation of the breviary. Through the formalism of the breviary many priests have lost the meaning of prayer; their whole life is formalism. Let us be grateful to God at this time of the Council for the renewal that will come in the whole liturgy, so that we will be able to listen to the word of God more lively, so that our answer will be more conscious, personal, and communal of the children of God. I am grateful that the Council opened the door for all necessary adjustments for the breviary. The president of the liturgical committee did not wish to open the door too much despite appeals by certain Cardinals. With good bishops and superiors we will come around. At least the council made a compromise. It was a good one. If Latin, for instance, is blocking the prayer, for a very grave reason, it is possible to allow it in vernacular. I wrote, together with Fr. Jungmann and others, how they would explain this reasoning, because if there is a very great hindrance to prayer, then it is divine law that permits it, namely, we should not babble like children. They voted on it and asked he must generously allow it. It means at least in moral theology of St. Alphonsus that if the bishop doesn't allow it, one can go ahead in spite of this refusal. If a bishop doesn't allow it and there are grave and necessary reasons for a priest's recitation of it in the vernacular, the bishop is sinning against charity and justice. St. Alphonsus would then say that the priest cannot associate himself with the sin of the bishop. He must use "epikeia". If a priest fully realizes the divine law and sincerely wishes to pray (not because he is just lazy), if Latin doesn't work, then he must try it in the vernacular. At Conception Abbey I spoke to an old man, a servant, who said: "My prayer life is still German." But why, I asked, do you not pray in English? He said it just doesn't work. So is it with priests. They know Latin, but it doesn't work as the expression of their lively experience. It was an interesting intervention of Cardinal Ritter, when at the beginning the German bishops declared they would do everything to have their students learn Latin well but that they needed vocations. For pious men who do not reach the knowledge of Latin, at least they asked, give them a dispensation to pray it in German. After this German appeal came Cardinal Ritter. He said, it is not a question whether they can learn Latin or not. Their religion is their life and it must be in vernacular. It is a question of life, and religion is life. I feel it was one of the best interventions of the Council.

But for some it is good to keep it in Latin certain days and other days to say it in English. Our ordinaries also can make



commutations. If at some time the psalms do not give nurture, you can take advantage of this commutation. You can make twenty minutes of pious spiritual reading in the spirit of prayer, etc. There are all possibilities open now as long as one does the best in his situation. Furthermore, it was also said that the seminarian must learn what is the meaning of the breviary, that he must study the depths of the psalms and other prayers and scripture to learn patiently the whole structure and beauty of the breviary. For some who are tempted to pray the breviary too quickly, it is sometimes necessary that they obtain the commutation of the quantity into a time period. For many priests it was a personal salvation that instead of quantity they reserved one hour distributed over the day for the breviary and did not try to say the whole quantity but rather tried to do it slowly. Especially now we cannot continue the practice of those priests in the past who wished to fulfill only the law. Therefore, before Mass they began with Prime (Matins and Lauds were done the night before), and after Mass they said Compline. Here we can vividly detect mechanical formalism. They were saying morning prayers in the evening, and evening prayers in the morning. When I was learning moral theology my professor said it was a mortal sin if one postponed compline until evening and anticipated next day's matins in the afternoon. However, it was perfectly all right to say Compline in the morning, then Matins in the afternoon. Because we refused to go along with him, he doubted our vocation.

Our firm rule in prayer must be to give our prayer a full meaning in our life. You are sincere in other things, so be sincere in your prayer. Now we are free from Prime and it is good, for so many priests were saying "Iam lucis orto sidere" at eleven o'clock at night, of course, in good conscience. They became typical of the attitude of the clergy all over the world.

We must be aware of the danger of formalism. If you pray, says the Lord, don't go babbling on like the heathens. It must be a continual effort. I am admiring the daily notes of Pope John XXIII who each day made his examination on his meditation, breviary and rosary. Sometimes he expressed his gratitude that his prayers were not distracted, but on other days he said his prayers were distracted because he didn't prepare himself for the office. It is tremendous to see how he was so systematic from his very youth. This made him such a sincere man that the world felt he was a man who meant what he said. He was sincere with God. He didn't fall into formalism. We are not listened to because we are not sincere with God. We do not mean what we say.

The greatest thing in our life is prayer, a prayer that has its foundation not in our wisdom, not in our desires, but a prayer that has its foundation in the word of God, in the One who is the Word of the Father, in Jesus Christ.

The sacraments teach us what it means to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. In the sacraments we receive Him, we associate ourselves to His life, to His prayerful death, to His sacrifice. In the sacraments the Lord grants us His death, His resurrection, and gives Himself with His blood. The answer of our prayer is to give ourselves totally to God with our blood with the hope that our last prayer will be our death, the great expression "Here I am. Take me Father."

Dear friends, pray in these days that God in his bounty may make us men of prayer, that we do not fall into an activism, into dead formalism, and that our hearts will remain full of joy as our Lord says in this chapter of St. John "That your joy may be full." If you are men of prayer, united with Him Who is the Word of the Father and Who answers in the name of mankind, if you receive Him and give yourselves to Him and with Him to the Father, then your lives will be ever more full of joy and will share the power of the death and the resurrection of the Lord. Then you can bring the Good Tidings of the love of God to men. We know that we will be heard in our lifetime and at the hour of our death because the Father has loved us; because we have believed in the Son, have given ourselves to Him Who is the gift of the Father and Who gave himself back in an infinite love to the Father. Let us pray to the Blessed Virgin. She is the prototype of the Church, the Church as the incarnation of prayer, living from the word of God and giving herself ever more to Christ who is the Word and the prayer at the same time. Amen.

Meditation III

PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS (2)

"Again, when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues or at street corners to attract the attention of their fellow men. I tell you plainly, they have their reward already. When you pray, retire to your private room and bolt the door, and then pray to your Father in secrecy; and your Father, who sees what is secret, will reward you.

Moreover when you pray do not use many and idle words, as the heathen do; for they think that their glibness will win them a hearing. So do not imitate them. Surely your father is acquainted with your needs before you ask him. The following then, must be the pattern of your prayer: Our Father in heaven! May you be known and glorified, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as well as in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors; and do not expose us to temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Matthew 6: 5-13

"Once he was somewhere engaged in praying. When he had finished, one of his disciples said to him: 'Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'

He said to them: 'When you pray, say as follows: Father, may you be known and glorified; may your kingdom be established; give us day after day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone indebted to us; and do not expose us to temptation.'

Luke 11:1-4

Jesus, at the very heart of his teaching of the New Law in the Sermon on the Mount, teaches us how to pray. Our Lord taught us how to pray even more so than John who taught prayer to his disciples. Christ did it first by His example. For those around Him saw Him in prayer, they heard Him in prayer. They heard the depths of his heart "Abba", "Father". Our Lord is teaching us by the whole gospel. At the same time that He taught His law of the new covenant he taught the prayer of the new covenant and they are especially the sacraments which teach us how to pray.

In this meditation I will try to give a synthesis of how the sacraments illuminate prayer especially as taught in the "Our



Father," and how the law of the sacraments in their whole structure and the structure of prayer are the outline and rule of our life.

You know that the great theologians, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, often tried to find for each demand of the Our Father a corresponding sacrament. They taught that every sacrament has a specific corresponding beatitude and a specific corresponding fruit of the spirit and as such they constitute the fullness of Christian morality. These are deep considerations but sometimes they remain artificial. But there is something essential in these considerations by the doctors of the Church and we try to keep that which is essential. We must try to see that there is not departmentalization: sacraments here and the Our Father there, and the moral law something still different. It is but one structure, taught by the liturgy, by the Our Father, by Christian morality.

It is not just a question of understanding every demand or meaning of a single sacrament, rather it is a question of the whole structure, a perspective. "Our Father!" You notice that the texts of Matthew and Luke differ. Those who insist that our Lord taught us a formula as an essential formula for prayer are wrong and are proved wrong by Scripture itself. If this were so, our Lord would have had them memorize it; in which case Luke would have been a bad disciple. Luke brings out only the heart of the words of Matthew. But both are trustful, have the same structure, and are one in spirit.

Accordingly, the very first word differs. Matthew has "Our Father" and Luke only has "Father". It is essential to see that both versions are really one: the prayer of our Lord is simply "Abba", "Father". Here is the foundation of prayer. Christ, who is the Word of God and at the same time the Answer, as the Apocalypse explains, cries "Abba". Our prayer is to join Him in this answer. He prayed "abba" in our name. The Word Incarnate, bringing the message to us and taking our needs and joys to the Father, spoke in our name but as the Beloved Son of "Abba", "the Father".

How could Christ so courageously cry out "Abba"? He could do so because He heard that voice which explained His essence: "This is my Beloved Son." He knew from the beginning that His human nature was assumed into the divine person of the Word. But for us, since we depend on what is perceptible, there is first a voice from heaven saying "This is my beloved Son". For the Apostles the voice of the Father proclaiming Christ as the Beloved Son was necessary before they could understand Christ's reply in return "Abba". In like manner the sacraments teach us that the voice coming from heaven in baptism is that of the Father's calling us in Jesus Christ to be His beloved children. St. Cyril of Jerusalem teaches the newly-baptized that just as the voice of the Father at the baptism of Christ proclaimed "This is my Beloved Son", so you, newly-baptized, have heard in the sacrament of baptism this



same voice from heaven proclaiming "You are my beloved children", because you are now baptized in Christ Jesus. This voice written in our hearts by baptism is the character of the sacrament giving us the divine power to speak truly, really and sincerely, "Abba", "Father". But it can only be Our Father because we know it is only in Jesus Christ, only in the Body of Christ, only in the family of the children of God who are gathered by and in Jesus Christ.

Thus, that our prayer must be personal is seen by the structure of the sacrament of baptism and by the prayer of our Lord; for we say "Father". Yet this same personal prayer is always communal, even if we are praying in our room without the bodily presence of others; for we pray as members of Christ "Our Father". We are personalities only if we are aware of our unity with and in Christ and of our unity with all men especially those who are already members of Christ and living this life in grace. Yet at the same time just as Christ prayed and made His life and death a prayer for all mankind, we pray in representation of all men, especially those not yet children of God. We must feel united in deep solidarity with those who are called to be children of God and have not yet answered.

"Father, our Father, Thou art in heaven". We recall the admonition of the preacher of the Old Testament: "Don't forget when you make words before God, God is in heaven." Just as the first address, i.e., Our Father, ver wonderfully unites the personal and communal aspect, so this first address (Our Father) coupled with "Who art in heaven: presents us with a wonderful unity and harmony, but it is a unity of tension. God Who is so near to us is the same three-fold holy God who is in heaven. Lurgy is both the darkness of God protecting us, for if we should see the full light of His holiness we would die, and also the manifestation of His nearness, of His blissfulness for His children. Sacramental life is at one and the same time "mysterium faciosum" (the blissful mystery of the love of God) and the "mysterium tremendum" (the mystery of the sanctity of God).

Because of this tension there are two dangers in both our prayer life and morality. Some speak only of the love of God and that He allows us a good life; to drink much, to sleep long, to be a good fellow, to live and let live, and even to yield ourselves to many desires. They see God only as a good man, "Our Father" and not He "Who is in heaven", Who is transcendent. When I was in Krakow, Poland I asked a boy of 14 years, "what do you know about God?" "I don't know anything," he replied. "But surely you have heard something of Hom." He said, "Oh yes, our teacher told us that our Russian planes, flying the heavens for over 25 years, were seeking the Old Man but didn't find him." For some God is this old grandfather who with tears in his eyes allows everything that little children do. He might not be delighted, but he allows it. There is the other danger: those who believe God is a rough

and transcendent Father. Whenever a child makes a mistake, they threaten the child with God "Who is in heaven". They make God a demon.

The healthy religious life is to support this tension and bring it into harmony. It is justifiable to insist on the love of God but one only truly knows the love of God if he knows at the same time that God is in heaven. It is the holy love of God! It is also the health of liturgical piety to be aware of the mystery of the death of our Lord because of His obedience to God Who is in heaven, "God, God, why have you forsaken Me" and to be aware that the Son was offended and humiliated by our sins for the love of the Father; and at the same time, to be aware of the blifssul mystery of the resurrection, glorification of the Son, the fullness of love. This tension must lead to harmony in our morality. We have all been challenged with the vocation to sanctity (there is a beautiful text in the Council in the chapter on the Church stating as a truth of faith that all Christians have the vocation to sanctity). This sanctity must be considered in the light of the holiness of God and at the same time to accept the patience of God, the patience of God our Father. We must accept with pastoral wisdom a step by step education in sanctity, to accept the law of growth, to be patient with ourselves and others as God is patient. This patience is an energy coming from our faith constantly calling and helping us to sanctity.

We must support this tension and yet there is always the temptation in Christian life and all religions to take just one part. Moralists take only the minimum part, the patience of God, which makes God a grandfather. The ascetics accept only the perfect realization and kill those not perfect. To put it simply, there is just one bed for all people. If one is too long, cut off his head; if too short, stretch him. A simplification! This is always a temptation, but we must always remember that fullness of life is harmony in tension and tension in harmony. In the liturgy we experience the love of God, trust in God, but we also experience penance, a continuous conversion, a crying to God from the depths of our misery.

"Our Father, Thou art in heaven, hallowed by Thy Name." Biblical scholars tell us today that this part of the prayer means first God in His transcendence, His greatness and not man's role and place in honoring this God. We see first that God has made manifest the fullness of His love, so that His name may be glorified and the glory of His love made manifest. If God manifest and shows us His love, it is clear that He gives us an experience of this tremendous love so that we know that we are associated with Him and that we are to honor his name as Father.

This is indeed the teaching of the sacraments. God first sanctifies us. All gifts of God are the revelation of the holiness of God and God through the sacraments bring us into the realm of

his sanctity. He makes us His children. It is through them that we are urged to render Him the honor as Father and hallow his name. Our whole life must be a reply, a hallowing of His name. We must view all things in the perspective of what God is doing, what does God wish. If one is aware and very conscious that God has revealed his name as Father and has revealed the glory of his love, then a man's whole life must be a reply. He must give honor to God as Father. He must hallow His name. We give honor to God as Father by giving of our personal life and not only following general abstract rules. We must follow the rules because we are men of a society and a family of God, but everyone must give himself. He must use all his gifts in the service of God in order to glorify God who has given all things to us. One must live his own life if he is to glorify God, but he must do it within the family of God. We can glorify God the Father by living a personal life in a dialogue of love and self-giving to God the Father. We are not only members in automation, we are persons, individuals, called by a personal name. This is christian personalism lives a personal life but always trying to build up the Mystical Body of Christ. We are glorifying the Father, "Our Father", if we are praying to Him conscious that we are praying through our unity and charity, through our solidarity.

"Hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come." We have already made our reflection on the meaning of the kingdom of God. God in the fullness of time will again send His beloved Son Who will reign over us not by threatening and fear but by love and in love. This kingdom has begun already with the first coming of Christ and he is reigning now by love and in love. The full realization of this kingdom, through, will take place at the fullness of time.

An old missionary after my retreat to the Holy Father asked me, "Did you not neglect the great eternal truths? Fear, hell, sin, judgment?" I asked him: "Do you not believe as eternal truth the mystery of redemption?" "Yes, yes," he replied, "but I mean the really great truths?" Surely if one doesn't accept the kingdom of God, if one is not led by the joy and by the holy fear of the children of God who fear nothing but to offend the Father in heaven, then this reign is truly a terrible thing. But it is the very essence of biblical teaching concerning the kingdom of God that God will reign through his grace and love, the very atmosphere and very life of the kingdom of God. That is also the teaching of the sacraments. There is not first a law but rather a grace. Moralists have changed it over the years. They have worked through long treatises and found the first question: Are you obliged under mortal sin to receive baptism? Yes. Confirmation? No. It's not necessary for salvation, but since you are missing something, perhaps it's a venial sin. In administering the sacrament of confirmation Prummer says you can commit 29 sins against the positive law of the Church and by receiving it you can commit about the same number. But

liturgy doesn't speak to us in this way. I doubt if Mother-Church is really always threatening eternal jail for every rubric which is broken. Of course, if one is a stubborn man and will show God that he doesn't like his law, and then transgresses the rubrics, that is another question. His stubborn disobedience is wrong, not the law.

In the sacramental life as in moral there is, first of all, the grace of God, the gift of God. The sacraments are the tremendous signs of the goodness of God. One who is a child of God cannot refuse them. One who knows we are living in the epoch of the Holy Spirit, in the law that frees us from sin, cannot refuse the sacrament of confirmation if he has understood its meaning. It is a matter of understanding the profundity of the sign of Christ. We first receive the grace of God and then He will reign in us. He will make us live by His grace and His gifts and one accepts the kingdom of God if one tries to live in accordance with the gift of God, tries to know the goodness of God, and tries to know what God gives him each day and return all to God in the service of his neighbor.

Sacraments are visible signs of the Lord Who came not to be served but to serve. God made Him Lord, God declared Him Lord over the whole world because He lived up to the loving will of the Father. He has put Himself in the service of all mankind. This is what we ask when we pray "Thy kingdom come": that God by His abundant gifts may teach us this new law of life, the law of grace. This law is the law of growth. Go often our Lord compares the kingdom of God with all sorts of images which explain growth. Slowly our life must be permeated, totally permeated, by this law of grace and love. We must be patient and energetic and persevering in this growth.

Through the sacraments we become alive in the Lord. This life, then, obliges us to be a light to the world, the salt of the earth, a cane to the blind. But it obliges us first to live completely in the full daylight of Christ. In the light of the Gospel St. Paul calls this daylight the law of faith. His rigorous friends accused him of spoiling the law. I am also accused of breaking down the law, but I see it as a great honor. With St. Paul I repeat: "Legem destruimus? Absit!" We never break down the law but state it, that is, we consider all things in the light of the Gospel, in the light of the Good Tidings which proclaim the love of God. We accept the love of God as our rule of life. We do not start with rubrics, threatening mortal sins--can you imagine 254 sins in the administration of the sacraments. But if one has learned what is the kingdom of God, what is faith, what the Gospel is and what Christian joy consists in, he will observe as much as he can all the rubrics. It doesn't hurt us to learn the rubrics, to learn the law; but we must remember that it is human to forget. On television one can see the Holy Father commit

many sins against the rubrics. But he has so much work now, how can he have time to learn all the rubrics! But others have time. As seminarians you have the time. But some of you will have time to forget them also. There should be no anxiety here if one has a good will. We must give rubrics a significance and perform them in such a way that it is an expression of our faith. But first we must understand what is the Word of the liturgy and accept this wonderful Word as our rule of life. We will then recognize our human condition humbly. If one is overly energetic in regard to positive law he will forget the greater things, the more preferred things. He will suppress joy, thus spoiling the law of faith. But when you are establishing the law of faith, you establish joy, sincerity and gratitude; you establish the great rule of the kingdom of God--love of brother--; and then you will truly broaden the mind. You will even make yourself more intelligent. At the beginning of their lives there were some saints who were not very intelligent, but by their sanctity they became even more intelligent. Take the example of John Vianney! And with this opening up comes many more possibilities to forgive and to love which we would never have known in the old way. "Seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will be given you." It must be our balance and our guide in the Christian life.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". This is a very courageous statement. It is really a knock-out for the moralists, who trust only in negative, prohibitive laws. They are truly knocked-out when they consider it because here our Lord teaches us to pray that already on earth the will of God may be done as in heaven. In heaven there are no laws. There are no moralists in heaven; they are useless! There is but the blissful power of the love of God. Whoever receives this love of God gives himself totally blissfully and joyfully to the love of God. On earth we still need law. But first we must believe the Gospel: that already here on earth the love of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Spirit. The heavenly power of love is already given us. Everyday we must pray that the kingdom of God may be manifest, that we do the will of God which is to love. We do not simply ask must I do this under pain of mortal or venial sin, but we ask as children of God what if Thy loving will Father! If one is doubting to do this rather than that, and it is an important decision, go to the Lord and say: "Lord, is it true, if I do this, can I say that I am doing it to please You and to do Your will." If one is sincere in his prayer, sometimes the answer is "no", these are my own desires." Already at the present time we have received the eschatological gift of the Spirit, the love of God, and it must be the powerful rule of our life. But these things are not yet totally fulfilled. We still need moralists to chart out a guide, but not a rigoristic moral theology. We need them to show us the goal of perfect sanctity; to show us the exigencies to follow, and to educate us to the goal step by step. But all such teachings are useless for men who are not accepting the gift of God as an urging power of love, urging us to grow in the love of God. If one does not pray sincerely that "Thy will be done as in heaven", he abuses always the moralists. And if moralists do not pray this same prayer, they

are abusing their profession. It must be the central motion, the direction, the great desire, the great prayer coming from faith, that the love of God is poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit and that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread". For real liturgical piety, the main aspect of this plea is the Eucharist. It is the Eucharist which holds the central place in our lives: "Give us this day our daily Bread". This same idea is expressed in the Mass immediately before the Our Father: "Per quem haec omnia, Domine, semper bona creas, sanctificas, vivificas, benedixisti, et praestas nobis." All things are included in this great Gift, the Bread of eternal life. Everything reaches its full life and meaning only if we see it in the light of Christ, the Bread of eternal life. It becomes the unity of liturgical piety, which is not at one time supernatural and then another time natural. I ask you to pray for the Council, especially for our work on the schema "The Church and the World". But there are other schemas which are of great importance in which I am not personally involved. I spoke, for example, to many bishops concerning the reform of seminary study. I feel it is a harm spending three years dwelling on the natural plane of philosophy, and sending their faith on a three-year vacation. Then after three years we are turned to the supernatural plane of faith. There is a dichotomy here. Sacramental piety includes all things of the earth: bread, wine oil etc. Everything is sanctified; all things have a new creation, a new meaning. Sacramental piety appreciates the gift of everyday, the small things, the world in its beauty, divine providence, because the One who created the world is the same as He who redeemed it. From Christ are all good gifts coming to us, if but first we seek the kingdom of God. In our prayer we must first see the Bread of Eternal Life as our bread; then all other demands have their right place and are integrated.

There is another aspect taught us by the liturgy. We dare to speak to God as "Our Father" and dare to ask Him "Give us this day our daily bread". We see that the bread is already prepared by the sacrifice of Christ. It is already on the altar. We know that God knows what we need. He has already prepared the best gifts for us. How can we be so bold? We can only if we give Him glory, if we honor and hallow His name, if we recognize all things as being from His goodness, if we open ourselves through humble prayer to recognize His glory, His kingdom and His loving will. Then we may dare say "Our Father, give us this day our daily bread."

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This trusting prayer for forgiveness of guilt has its sacramental basis because, as St. Thomas says, all sacraments are in one or another way instituted "in remissione peccatorum." Baptism gives us a remission of original sin and personal sin and in the very heart of the Eucharist the priest says "in remissione peccatorum." The Lord shed His blood for the forgiveness of our

sins. We dare to pray so trustfully and confidently because we know the will of God is to forgive us our sins through the law of the Spirit and His gifts. But at the same time we must acknowledge this great act of God towards us. We do this by making His merciful love, shown to us, the rule of our own attitude toward our neighbor. We must forgive those who owe anything to us. One is not open to the mercy of God if he remains in his hardness, in his rough attitude toward others. One shows that he is a liturgical Christian living from the merciful love of God if everyday, more and more, he becomes kind, understanding, merciful, and patient toward his neighbor.

Once I gave a retreat and I sang solemn Mass. I am not a good singer. Sometimes I do well, sometimes not! This day I felt it went pretty good. The musicmaster came to my room and said to me after Mass: "Father, I will not come anymore to your conferences." Why? "You took the wrong tone at the Gloria. You could have been better prepared. I have been teaching my students exactitude and now you sing in such a bad way. How can I teach the liturgy when you have committed such an error. It is a scandal." He didn't come anymore to the conferences. He was a liturgical man, a liturgist, but he was sick, thus God excused him. But many liturgists are sick! If they were not sick they would realize that the whole liturgy is the experience of the merciful patience of God. Some disturb the whole joy of Easter because someone has committed a sin against the rubrics and says therefore the whole day isn't good. We do our best to celebrate a beautiful liturgy but we accept our weakness and even our weaknesses during the whole day. We must not only be patient with ourselves, but have humor with ourselves. After humility, humor with oneself is the greatest virtue, and after that, humor with others which is patient and kind. One cannot glorify the name of the merciful Father if he is very impatient with himself and his neighbor. But Patience means energy to love, not the patience of the Old Grandfather. It is a patience which is goodness and kindness, but at the same time a constant effort to make progress.

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." This is the last demand, a great one, but not the first. It is wrong to make it first; it falsifies the meaning. If one considers the sacraments only as remedies, as a gas-station for the needs of one week, he never will have gas for his motor which runs on the love of God. He must first see the sacraments as gifts of "Our Father". In this context he will experience God calling him to be a child. Man's great desire should be "hallowed be Thy name, thy kingdom come." The right understanding of the Christian life is "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." He must ask for the greatest gift--that of eternal life and included in this petition to see the meaning of all gifts of God. He must know the forgiveness of God by joining the goodness and mercy of God to his own mercy. Then he knows what it means to be delivered from temptation and evil.

The sacraments are remedies if they are but signs of cult. But they are much more! They are personal encounters with God in the community of salvation. If we accept these gifts of God as the rule and guide of our life, then we already are delivered from great evils. Every thing must have its proper place. Theology is a science and it is this sacred science which leads to a synthesis, an integrated approach; that everything has its proper place in the whole perspective.

Let us thank our Lord that through the Church and the liturgy given to the Church by Himself, Christ teaches us how to pray. He in the Our Father gave us a great orientation. Let us pray often for the right balance and integration of our life. Then we can live, we can express through our very life the mystery of Christ and the nature of the Church, and manifest it to others. It must be a great effort but especially it must be a great prayer, a great demand, that everything becomes integrated, receives the right place. It is a gift of God. We cannot do this ourselves; we must first pray for this balance. Then our life becomes joyful, balanced in tension and ever more drawing nearer to the Lord and to harmony. We admire in the whole life of our Lord and even in the tremendous hour of His death this harmony that is finally expressed when he cries for our need, "My God, my God, why have Thou forsaken Me?" And at the same time He gives the answer, "Into Thy hands, Father, Father, I put my spirit." Here the Lord gives everything its proper balance. May He help us! May we not lose patience, even if we need many many years to make the step to this proper integration of our whole life. Amen.

Meditation IV

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM (1)

"The grace of God, which is the means of salvation for all men, has made its appearance and instructed us to reject irreligion and worldly lusts and to live prudent, just, and religious lives in this world, while we await the realization of our blessed hope, the brilliant coming of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from every kind of iniquity and cleanse a people for his very own, zealous for good deeds. Speak these truths; exhort too and reprove with full authority. Do not allow anyone to despise you.

...But when the goodness and kindness of God Our Saviour toward all mankind appeared, then, not because of deeds we ourselves had done in a state of holiness, but in virtue of his mercy, he saved us through the bath in which the Holy Spirit regenerates and renews us. This Spirit God has richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, in order that, made holy by his grace, we may in hope become heirs of life everlasting.

What I have just said is trustworthy, and I desire you to insist on these things so that those who have faith in God may be anxious to excel in good deeds. These counsels are excellent and useful to men. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and quarrels and disputes about the Law, for they are useless and futile."

Titus 2:11-15; 3:4-9

The goodness of God has become known and visible to men. St. John in his first epistle insists that the grace of God, the love of the Father, was made visible in Christ. He could be seen and touched by men. The splendor and glory of God had been seen and touched. St. Paul in this text written to his beloved disciple Titus insists that it is grace that teaches us both negatively and positively how to avoid godless things and how to open ourselves to whatever is acceptable to God and to expect in trustfulness the glorious coming of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. He insists twice that this is the way to teach the people; the right way is to teach them to follow the school of grace. He here repeats in a pastoral letter that which he himself had done

in his letters to Christian people. From his very first letter until his last he follows this line of thought: that they have to know, and know ever better, what the grace of God is; that our life is under the law of grace; that grace is seeking us. This is also the way of the liturgy where through His Church God by visible signs and understandable words teaches us the meaning of grace. From this understanding, from this school of the essence of grace, we are also instructed in regard to Christian life. By opening our missal we will see there the constant teaching that we keep in our life what we have celebrated in the liturgy, i.e., what God has made known to us in the celebration of the Easter mystery.

We will consider in the following meditations how the grace of every sacrament teaches us the meaning of Christian life. In our text Paul says that the grace of God appeared and teaches us. He is speaking of the bath of regeneration, baptism. Baptism is the fundamental teaching for Christians and especially for priests. It is a wrong asceticism if we begin our meditations with the priesthood, or if monks begin with their vows and build up for the monastic life a spirituality that forgets the foundation. That foundation is baptism. First, we must be good Christians. If we are not, then we cannot be good priests.

What does it mean to be a good Christian? Baptism, by its grace and special gift, teaches us the answer. St. Cyril says in his catechesis: "As well-instructed disciples of the New Covenant, share in the mysteries of grace, create in yourselves a new heart and a new spirit." We are well-instructed disciples of the New Covenant if we understand better and better the basic first sacrament that introduces us into this Covenant. By baptism we become people of the New Covenant, we become sharers of the New Covenant. Thus it is of primary importance to understand the meaning of this sacrament. I repeat, it would be wrong to run too quickly into the moral aspect. Only if we understand the dogmatic theology of baptism, the grace given in the sacrament, can we understand the moral teaching. Moral theology is not to be separated from grace. We are not under Law, but under grace says St. Paul in his catechesis on baptism, Romans 6. There is not a law existing in addition to the whole order of faith and grace. Grace itself gives direction to our life.

In this meditation and the following one we shall consider the sacrament of baptism under four essential aspects. We could develop baptism further but here we are only considering the essentials. (1) Baptism teaches us spiritual childhood; (2) Baptism teaches us the solidarity of salvation; (3) The grace of Baptism teaches us to be resolute; and (4) The grace of baptism teaches us apostolic zeal for non-Christians.



1. Baptism teaches us spiritual childhood.

Baptism transforms us into the likeness of Christ, the Son of God. This is the essential teaching of St. Paul in Rom. 6 and 8. In Gal. 3 he says: "baptized in Christ we have put on Christ." St. Cyril exegetes these words of Paul as I explained previously. He compares the baptism of Christ when all heard the voice coming from the Heavenly Father "This is My Beloved Son" with our baptism. At baptism we heard the voice coming from heaven through the power of the Holy Spirit: "Now you have become my holy children."

We must look first to Christ, to his childlike behavior, to the Father. He, as the Beloved Son, must be the prototype of the life of all the baptized. He makes clear from his morning prayer to the evening prayer of his life what is the behavior of a son. Entering into life he prays: "A body Thou hast fitted unto Me; a body of death." Body in the Hebrew mentality means human nature and not merely the prison of the soul as the Greeks taught. The body is a living body. "Behold, I am coming to fulfill Thy will." As a gift from God the Son chooses that way of life and death that manifests how He returns His Father's gift. In this way He manifests to us His eternal life. In all eternity He receives himself from the Father. He is the Word of the Father.

St. Augustine repeats often that the Father expressed everything in His Word; all his vision, power, current of his life--all is spoken in His Word. This word is the Truth because it doesn't keep anything for Himself. He returns everything back in the same love. He is the full expression of the love of the Father giving Himself to the Father in return in the power of the Holy Spirit. He is the Son, the Beloved Son! The whole life of Christ--his prayer, deeds, and death--makes clear and understandable what it means to live as a son of God. His last prayer becomes: "Into thy hands, O Father, I commend my soul, my body, my life".

A child is a natural image of a son of God. A child cannot yet express in philosophical and abstract terms that he comes from his parents, but the child knows and realizes that he comes from his parents and that he doesn't lose himself by depending totally on the will of his father and mother. Through baptism we are more than a natural image of a son-of-God. We are a supernatural image, a new creation, the likeness of the Beloved Son. The teaching of baptism cannot be but that of Christ Himself who says: "Unless you be converted and become like little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." This attitude of childlike trust in one's father and mother must be for us a natural image and the primary school which prepares us for the highest teaching of baptism: to live the life of a child of God.

Baptism teaches us the proper idea of mankind, what is human nature. But it is not a teaching of Aristotelian categories, where first there is a substance, a man in his own nature, and then one deduces that this nature has some relations to God. Baptism does not teach that besides the virtues in the city of this world (justice towards your neighbor, temperance, reserving your soul for your own happiness) there is also some secondary relationship to God, namely, religion. Adam in his own sin would have easily recognized this type of philosophy. He didn't deny such a relationship existed but he did wish to reserve something to himself, to reserve just a small thing from God. The schooling of baptism, however, is quite different. By baptism we become a new creature into the likeness of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, a "relatio subsistens". Outside of this relationship to the Father the Son does not exist. It is total dependence; a coming from the Father and a turning back to the Father.

In the light of baptism, as well-instructed disciples of the New Covenant, we learn that it is our human "being" as a person to be called by God. Our very constitution is to be called into being by the very Word of God. We are not first a being, then called. We are called into existence. We find ourselves only by hearing this call and by making our whole life an answer to this call of God. By baptism we are called children of God. Therefore, our entire life must express this one wonderful truth of the Gospel, "Our Father".

"How can I render to God whatever I am, whatever I have?" First we render what we are, our very being, which is a gift of God. We are living the truth ;if we are a true and genuine image of the Son of God, if we are aware that all comes from God's goodness. Everything remains genuine and true only if we are returning this gift back to God.

The divine virtues of faith, hope, and charity are the power to fulfill this essential teaching of baptism. In revelation, through His Son, the Father reveals to us the mysteries of eternal love. He opens his heart through the teaching of His Son and through the eternal teaching of His Spirit. Faith in the biblical sense, and not the anti-Protestant sense, is this tremendous love of God who opens to us the truth of revelation. He reveals us His Truth, His Son, and therefore, knowing His Son and believing His Son and he who sends Him, we have eternal life. Faith is our "yes", and it is a divine power through the Holy Spirit to the One who is the Truth and included there are all the truths of salvation.

It is wrong to make the chief definition of faith from what is a dead faith. I repeat it for so many do it. It would be the same as defining human nature starting from a dead body. There is still something human in a dead body, it can be resurrected, but we cannot understand the real, full meaning of human nature by only starting from a dead body. Thus we cannot start defining

faith from the "fides nortus". We start from the "fides informata" this faith desiring its life and form which is charity. This is the viewpoint of St. Paul and St. John. God revelas His Truth in His Son and in His Son are revealed all the truths of salvation. It is never a mere object of memory, or something abstract. It is always an object of adoration, joy, happiness, of eternal beatitude. Faith is a participation in the dialogue between the Father and the Son. There is God who speaks and manifests Himself and there is man who by grace and by the Spirit opens his mind and intellect, and also his will and heart, to the truths of salvation.

There is also divine hope. In like manner we can only define and describe this virtue by looking to Christ. What is His trust, His trusting unto death? He has no fear of losing His life if He gives it for the life of the world. "I do not seek My glory", He says, "there is another who seeks it." He entrusts himself to the Father and gives himself to the Father unto death that the Father will vivify him and glorify him in the resurrection.

Christian hope makes us sharers of Christ's glory and heirs of God if we are ready to share the passion of the Lord. We cry "Abba" and we are heirs of God in Christ Jesus but with this condition that we have hope in the suffering of life and especially the suffering of death itself.

The Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy instructs the post-conciliar commission to make clear in the rite of the anointing of the sick what Christian hope really is. It is not so much the lamentations of Job who was living in the Old Testament, but the jubilee of Christ, "I do not need to seek my own glory, but that of My Father." Whoever gives his life, finds it. This brings light into our Christian hope throughout life.

The greatest power of childlike Christian life is charity, the divine agape--God giving himself to us and so making it possible for us to live as children of God, giving ourselves to Him in the service of our brothers.

This is the great great teaching of baptism, that through baptism we have become children of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son. "Agere sequitur esse" is a valuable principle which is true. We must first learn our new essence as children of God. We cannot learn this from another but from Jesus Christ. We must look to Him! But He is not just an external example and image; He lives, in us, and through us, His own Sonship!

2. Baptism teaches us the solidarity of salvation.

Once more this is the teaching of Christ's baptism, His coming to St. John in the Jordan. It was only a prototype of his great baptism on the Cross. A baptism I have to receive and how I am urged until it is fulfilled--His baptism of penance. It was such a tremendously new idea for St. John the Baptist that Innocence should recieve such a baptism of penance. But that was only the



beginning. That the one Who committed no sin died for our sins, that He Himself receives the baptism of blood and that He had to shed His blood on the cross; that is the real baptism and great sign of solidarity. The new head of mankind, the beloved Son of the Father, takes upon Himself the sin of the world in the greatest possible solidarity. It is the greatest act of solidarity and at the same time a manifestation of childlike confidence in the Father.

Through baptism we share one life with Christ Jesus. His whole life and death is an expression of solidarity. Therefore, one cannot live his baptism and be a good Christian without this fundamental attitude of solidarity. There are two different ways of considering love of neighbor. One attitude is: I love my neighbor because thus I am gaining merit for eternal life. Let's recall the famous example of 150 moralists. One is standing on a bridge and sees another struggling for life in the water. The one on the bridge says to himself, "I'm sorry, I must love myself more than my neighbor. The command is love your neighbor as yourself. Therefore the fundamental point of comparison must be greater, so my love for self must be greater. But I am a Christian and thus realize that I will still love myself more even if I jump into the waves, for I will be meriting for eternity." So he jumps! But it's too late by then! Actually he doesn't come back with any merit because he went not to save his neighbor but to gain merit for himself.

The other attitude consists in an awareness of our new being in Christ. One is aware that salvation is solidarity, that it is the very foundation of mankind that One died for all others. There is no salvation outside this attitude of solidarity. That we love one another as Christ has loved us--this is the new law. The other formulation "Love your neighbor as yourself" is only a preparation and receives its meaning in the light of the new Law, "Love one another as I have loved you." What is the love of Christ for us? It is the baptism of Christ in blood for his brothers.

One lives his baptism and his salvation only in solidarity of salvation. "In one Spirit," says Corinthians 12, "were we all baptized into one body, and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink." The Spirit, the gift of self, came down upon Christ in His baptism in the Jordan. He is the gift of power, of wisdom, in which the Father expresses Himself to the Word and in which the Son gives himself back to the Father. Christ is Anointed by the Spirit to give himself as a gift for his brothers. With that same Spirit are we baptized. St. Paul in chapter 12 says, therefore, that every gift of God, every charism, every individual gift, is a gift of God and can reach its fullness only by being used in solidarity, i.e., in building up the Mystical Body. One is the great teacher of the freedom of the children of God, but at the same time, he is the greater teacher of solidarity. One cannot grasp the first unless he has grasped the fundamental law

of the Christian, the law of Christ, the law of solidarity. It is not a law imposed. We are not under law but under grace. There is a law written into our hearts, the new being of being baptized, the solidarity of salvation. One fulfills the law of Christ (this law of being in Christ) by bearing the burdens of one another!

St. Paul in II Corinthians says "animost Christi"; one's assimilation to Christ is the new law. Christ's baptism on the cross expressed His childlike behavior toward the Father and at the same time His full solidarity with mankind so it becomes the law of all the baptized, a law written into the heart of all the baptized. In baptism we have put on Christ and thus in Christ we all have become as one. Therefore, we must be of the same mind as Christ who did not live to please himself. In chapter 15 of Romans St. Paul expresses this with all his power. It is not an external law, added as something coming to the constitution of the baptized, but it is the essence of the new being in Christ.

Now we, the strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves! This is how to use the freedom of God. One who does not make his final judgment in view of his brother for his behavior has not grasped the meaning of freedom, of being the children of God. And the last and final aspect of judgment of behavior is in the light of the Mystical Body, especially for those who are weak. Let every one of you please his neighbor by doing good for his edification. That is the way of pleasing neighbor--doing good for his edification. Christ did not please himself but as it is written "the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on Me," the expression of his death. "For all things that have been written have been written for our instruction, that we may have hope." What follows from the teaching of the Old Testament is here fulfilled in Christ; and from it comes the idea of being patient with one another, not only externally but even bearing the burdens of another: "May the God of patience and comfort give you to be of one mind and heart toward each other according to Christ, that one in Spirit you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is no other way of glorifying the Father of Christ than this path of perfect solidarity. Christ's sacrifice and baptism of blood on the cross was a glorification of the Father in manifesting the solidarity of salvation. There are not two different sacrifices, two different commands. There is but one sacrifice, namely, Christ shedding his blood and thus glorifying the Father. One must realize and be aware in his own thinking this solidarity with Christ for only in this way can we give glory to the Father, "Our Father," the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This same teaching is found as strongly presented in the 4th chapter of Ephesians. The Council has employed this text often especially in the Constitution on the Church and thus it would be suitable to make a long meditation on it. Pope John in his Pentecost discourse in 1960 quoted this text, first in Italian, then in Latin saying that he would like to have it written in large letters on Vatican Council II. This Johannine teaching is "Love one another as I have loved you." It is the teaching of baptism as we find in chapter 4: "Therefore, the prisoner in the Lord is a free man but he makes himself the servant of all men." St. Paul, in order to be the great messenger of the children of God, is the prisoner of the Lord, making himself the free slave and servant of all men. "I exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling in which you were called (the calling, baptism, the fundamental calling) with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Then Paul presents the noble motives. They are not just "fines operantis", i.e., something added, but spring forth from the essences of the Christian vocation. These motives are: "one body, and one spirit." By baptism we are baptized into one body and one spirit as Galatians says: "even as you were called in one hope of your calling."

I have already expressed the childlike aspect of faith, hope and charity; but the divine virtues are also virtues of solidarity. We have faith only as sharers of the faith of the Church and we are called by one calling in hope. If one hopes only first in himself, it isn't hope. True Christianity has the means to overcome and conquer Communism. Those poor Christians who only wished to save their own souls and had no feelings for the crying desire of creation to be sharers of the blessed creatures of God; those creatures gave the monopoly of solidarity to communism. We can redeem the world from communism only by living this solidarity of our calling.

Sociology and psychology teach us how strong the fact of environment is on the individual. In the light of the teaching of baptism we must say there is no hope to save oneself from the bad influence of environment (cf. Ephesians 6 where Paul makes it clear that the bad angels are operating in this environment) unless one strongly feels the Gospel and solidarity. There is one hope, just as we are called in the one calling of Christ.

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Thus the entire motivation leads to this final teaching: one body, one spirit, one calling into one hope, one faith, one baptism. Through baptism, which is the eternal reality of our life, we come to the highest motive and say: "One God and Father of all, who is above all and throughout all and in us all."

In baptism we cry "Abba", "Our Father"! God teaches us this new law in such a wonderful way. It remains for us as priests to celebrate baptism in such a way that we ourselves understand it ever better and that we present its message ever better to the people through catechesis, preaching, and especially the performance of the sacrament itself. The celebration of baptism must be a communal act. The whole parish and community should assist. Baptism should take place during the chief mass of the morning; or the chief mass in the evening if that would be more suitable. On Sunday the whole parish should celebrate baptism so that all feel that baptism expresses the greatest and fundamental reality of our life--the solidarity of salvation. In addition, the presence of the whole community of the faithful guarantees the development of the faith of the one being baptized. The whole parish wishes to develop in him that which the sacrament gave him; the whole parish guarantees his eternal life. Through the celebration of the sacrament of baptism the faithful are taught by that very grace which becomes visible in the sign of the sacrament.

For myself, it was a tremendous experience to see during my four years work in Russia how these people had kept the sense of baptism even after 25 years of persecution. In one town the mother of two boys came to me and asked that I baptize the younger one. She had brought the older boy 200 miles over difficult roads to be baptized the previous year. She had done the same in order to have this younger one baptized, but a priest could not be found. Even many communists, functionaries of the party, had brought their children to Christins asking them to find a priest and have their children baptized. I myself baptized many of them, after having determined that they weren't schismatics. They were good Catholics having no schismatic attitudes. Their separation from the Church is a political fact beyond their will. They have great feastdays. In one village I baptized all the youth after having given them serious instruction, celebrating the sacrament in the Russian language for I had no ritual (I was forced by circumstances, by divine providence of course). The entire village was present and all were in tears. I was deeply moved to see them truly realizing the grace of baptism after all those years of persecution.

The great reality of the sacrament of baptism should be written into our hearts not just by catechesis but by a great liturgical experience. From such an experience of the sacrament we should more deeply realize what we are, what is written in our hearts and very being. Only then will you realize what it means when I say: "Legem ergo destruimus. Absit. Statuimus legem." If one has understood the teaching of this fundamental reality, how can he be lazy and transgress the law of love? Would he not discover how to fulfill it ever better in all circumstances of his life?

Meditation V

THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM (2)

"What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin that grace may increase? By no means! For how shall we, who are dead to sin, still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into union with Christ Jesus have been baptized into union with his death? Yes, we were buried in death with him by means of baptism, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, so we also may conduct ourselves by a new principle of life. Now since we have grown to be one with him through a death like his, we shall also be one with him by a resurrection like his. We know that our old self has been crucified with him, in order that the body enslaved to sin may be reduced to impotence, and we may no longer be slaves to sin; for he who is dead is once for all quit of sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, since we know that Christ, having risen from the dead, will die no more; death shall no longer have dominion over him. The death that he died was a death to sin once for all, but the life that he lives is a life for God. Thus you too must consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ.

Do not then let sin reign in your mortal body so as to obey its lusts. And do not go on offering your members to sin as instruments of iniquity, but once for all dedicate yourselves to God as men that have come to life from the dead, and your members as instruments of holiness for God; for sin shall not have dominion over you, since you are not subjects of the law but of grace."

Romans 6:1-14

3. The grace of baptism teaches us to be resolute.

St. Paul had a vocation to suffer in fighting against false brethren, that is against the rigorists. He had seen from experience how such legalism created so many troubles, enmities, and opposition within the Christian community. Legalism was the barrier that closed the doors of the Church for pagans and Gen-

tiles. He had to fight for liberation. He understood that he had to preach the freedom of Christians from unnecessary laws. Not only were Christians free of the Old Testament law, but they were not under any law. St. Thomas, in his commentary on St. Paul, insists that Paul does not place the Christian under law. St. Thomas, St. Augustine and all the really great teachers of the Church understood well that our age is the victorious and decisive fight against sin. Men who consider the existence of a Christian, fight against sin. Men who consider the existence of a Christian, at least in moral discipline, as an existence under the letter or regime of law have not realized the powerful decision to live a new life. They have not yet realized what Christ is. The legalist sees first the written law. He first preaches the letter of the law, that is, principles of the law. Only secondarily does he preach Christ as the means we need to keep these principles. Christ in other words is necessary for the law. There are many today who are preaching in such a manner.

Ten or twelve years ago I began giving retreats every month for engaged couples at Munich. In preparing them I phoned a good doctor-friend who had studied depth psychology so that he might give them a conference from the medical viewpoint of married life. He did well but at the end of his conference he began preaching: "These laws are difficult, but you have the sacraments." After the conference I asked him to leave the preaching to me. He said: "Why? I've always heard it that way?" How unfortunate! It is a wrong approach, very very wrong; a disgrace, an injustice against Christ and against a special state. How often is this the approach to marriage because it is the approach to the whole Christian life: principles, then sacraments, then God, then the Holy Spirit--all helpers for these laws.

Let us return to this one area of marriage. The correct preaching would have stated that the great intention of God is that married people be sharers of the life of Christ and of his Church by their humble striving for perfection. Through a humble love of the Church, a love involving purification according to the intention of God, all the natural necessities take on a higher quality. We must always see the first intention: to love God and to fully see what is a sacrament, a high vocation, a state of grace-life. What is more, it is essential that the baptized see it as such. There are those into whose hands so many Christians have fallen, who have robbed the joy of Christianity, as if we were entering a concentration camp of many laws after which we will enter heaven. They would say that in the meantime, in this concentration camp, we must bear up under them knowing that God will repay us after death. By baptism we take on all these obligation

They preach that we have the law and then the grace to aid us in keeping it. That is completely wrong! This approach has minimalize the Christian life and especially Christ, Who is more than a helper to fulfill moral exigencies.

Christ is our life, our Redeemer. He makes us sharers of His justice, of his death which He endured because of His tremendous love for the Heavenly Father and for us. He makes us sharers of the power of the Holy Spirit who has raised Him from the dead. One who has understood this message of St. John and St. Paul, understands how great should be our love. One hundred and sixty-four times St. Paul states: "To be in Christ": Christ is in us and we live in Him! There is a new life for us; a life that is in the likeness of Christ's death which is the greatest proof of His love for us and for the Heavenly Father. There is a new creation, and we are new creatures as real sharers of the power of His resurrection. Our life is under grace! One who has accepted this Good Tidings and believes this Gospel will be transformed. The Christian's faith and joyful acceptance of grace gives him the firm resolution of living the life of Christ.

St. Paul had heard that his enemies were accusing him of breaking down the law by preaching to the faithful that they were not under law but under grace. Thus, St. Paul emphasized that even the most stupid fellow, if he still retains normal reason and has some faith, will understand that he is not a laxist. But St. Paul does not want to overburden people with thousands of unnecessary laws. With such laws St. Paul sees that man has no possibility of opening his heart unto joy and of realizing the newness of the things God has made.

The foundation of the Christian life is to believe the Gospel. From this belief comes the tremendous challenging call: we must change our minds and our hearts. But this challenge is not imposed as a law; IT REMAINS GOOD TIDINGS, a system of grace, goodness, charity and joy because there is no other law besides grace. It is grace itself, the goodness of Christ revealed in His death, the power revealed in His resurrection, the Spirit dwelling in our hearts. Assimilation to that love of Christ shown forth by His death and resurrection is completely opposed to self-love. A selfish man, confronted only with the law, reckons how far he can go until he reaches the limits where he is punished with eternal jail. He realizes that some transitory punishment and suffering is normal for a Christian to attain eternal happiness so he does renounce everything that is mortally sinful. But other things are only venial sins and may require spending 100 years in purgatory, but that's all right. Or, if he wishes even to avoid venial sin, still he considers almost everything that our Lord said on the Mount as counsel and advise only. It doesn't oblige unless one wants to attain a higher perfection. One can renounce with such reasoning the whole New Testament law because it is not to be understood as necessary. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon at the Last Supper cannot be understood as the rule of Christian life if one does not first understand that we are under grace, that the outline of the Sermon on the Mount and the Last Supper is only an explanation or basic guide for those who believe the Gospel in living the new life in Christ Jesus.

The legalist makes a resolution: I will absolutely avoid all things that are imposed under mortal sin. Especially will I never omit a small hour of the breviary. During Mass I will pay the greatest attention in not omitting 7 words in the Canon (6 are only venially sinful). During the administration of the sacraments I will pay close attention to performing them properly because there are 264 occasions in performing them to commit mortal sin. Then he is worried and becomes distracted in prayer! The mechanics continue. After every administration of a sacrament he knows he has something to confess. Yet does he ever confess that he wasn't joyful and didn't bring joy to other Christians in celebrating the Good Tidings of the sacrament? But he sees first only the laws. He considers as secondary and changeable all those laws written into our heart by the goodness of the Redeemer. They are only for higher perfection! He forgets what is essential. Thus, he has no joy and doesn't believe that the Gospel itself is his rule. He doesn't first see Christ as his life: "Christ is my life, death therefore is my gain! I must die to myself so that finally the hour of death will be the greatest hour of my gain because Christ is my life." That must be our resolution: to live the life of Christ, to know that we are dead to sin, to know that sin has no power over us, to know that even the devil has no power over us.

The exorcism during the liturgy of baptism is displeasing to many modern men who prefer that the renewed liturgy say nothing about the devil. I heard that very thing four weeks ago when in conversation I incidentally mentioned the devil and excited strong opposition. He means nothing to the modern world! However, we know that there is an eschatological battle between the "princeps tenebrarum"--Satan and his darkness, the liar--and Christ, the great leader of life, love, and joy. We must be aware of the earnestness of this eschatological battle. Yet at the same time, the liturgy of baptism tells us that the devil has no power over us. Those who commit themselves to life in Christ, who accept the new reality of baptism as life in Christ ruling their lives, are not dominated by the power of Satan. Exorcism is quite expressive in telling us that the devil has no power over the baptized. For those who commit themselves to the life of Christ in facing the death of Christ, for those who make the final baptismal vows blood for blood; for those also who renounce whatever would be ingratitude toward Christ who shed his blood for us: for all these Satan had no power.

I know that this poses problems for the teaching of moral theology. Look at some examples. We are so quick to declare that two ounces of meat on Friday is a venial sin and five grams more constitutes mortal sin; to come to Mass after the chalice is consecrated is mortal sin, to come one second earlier is venial. How mechanical mortal and venial sin become! After presenting such ideas as these on one occasion there was a reaction. During the first conference of a retreat I said I did not consider that my confreres, parish priests, were mortal sinners. I suppose that

the major part of their priesthood was lived in grace. Following the conference the dean came to my room and said: "Do you think we old priests can live without mortal sin? We cannot avoid all mortal sin." And he meant it, really! I asked him kindly, "Dear father dean, would you explain these mortal sins?" He told me lots of them that cannot be avoided during one's whole life. They were the exaggerations of the moralist. From this pessimism came his other conclusion: we must confess and resign ourselves to the fact that we are poor sinners. It is the mysticism of the poor sinner; pessimism, lack of joy. Time passed and after the retreat he came and said: "I will change much but not everything. But I promise you a lot of things will change. But have patience with me. I cannot change everything immediately. I have understood that one does not commit mortal sins if one tries to make a great step nearer to Christ.

We must be very generous in the Christian life, very decided upon avoiding any sin. It is a normal situation. At the same time we must know our smallness, that we are still pilgrims, that we are sometimes weak, that we have not yet perfection as our possession, that we can only strive towards it. But we must generously and decidedly strive toward perfection. We must accept the need of continual conversion. The essential, however, is that we believe the Gospel and open our heart and mind in meditation, spiritual reading, day and night-- "legem tuam delexi". Day and night we must make our meditation on the law of the Lord, the law of grace in the awareness that we are under grace. We must feel the nearness of the Lord. We must feel his love and patient energy in us. If we are weak and have been weak in the past, let us ask first in our heart if we sincerely and truly wish to live with Christ, if we still have this good will to become a saint and to follow our vocation to holiness. If we can say "yes, I sincerely mean to strive for sanctity", that is, if there is no doubt in our will, then if we were doubting whether we had acted against the law of God or positive laws of the Church, we can end our fears and say Mass and receive communion in good faith. But if one day we are doubting sincerely as to our resolution to strive toward sanctity, then the great danger in our life begins.

You should not be rigorists for yourselves. You should leave the final judgment on your actions to God. If there are really greater faults, generally considered by kind and understanding moralists as mortal sins, then go to confession humbly but leave the final judgment on mortal sin to God. Make a very serious judgment for yourself if you find your will is not good, that you are not sincerely striving for sanctity. But as long as you sincerely desire and pray with firm resolution to do everything possible in striving for sanctity, always be kind to your faults and still much more towards those of your neighbor. As confessors, we priests can learn a great lesson from St. Paul. He preaches baptism and life in accordance with the grace of baptism. At the same time he says that Christians are living in the state of grace.

He is patient and he urges them with his gospel to strive toward sanctity. He calls them "saints", "called" to the newness of life. Thus in St. Paul we see the proper tension of growth in our life. On one side we are firmly decided to live what we are, to strive to sanctity; on the other side we do not fall into laxism. There is no danger if we are patient with ourselves and our neighbors.

Those who have chosen wholeheartedly the reality of grace, this great participation in the mystery of the Death and Resurrection of the Lord; those who have chosen the divine love as the rule of their life: they will never lose this treasure of eternal life. They will fight if necessary, pray continually in the hour of temptation, will be to some extent always filled with joy in the Lord and "the joy of the Lord is our faith." Those who consider grace as the norm of life will implore with proper confidence the helping graces of God. The grace of baptism teaches us to be resolute but in the manner of the Easter mystery, that is, joyfully, with supernatural optimism. I commend to you the English translation of the notes of Pope John who was the image of optimism. How resolute he was each day to strive for sanctity through a sincere prayer life and through humility. His resolute will gave him this great optimism.

In a great gathering on Easter morning in Soviet Russia a preacher of atheism who had gathered the whole population of the town cried "God is dead!" One voice answered: "The Lord is risen!" In Russia, everyone on Easter morning cries out "The Lord is risen!" as a greeting. Another replied: "He is really risen!" and finally the whole gathering with one voice answered "Indeed, Christ is risen! I have the impression that many, in various areas of Christian life, especially in the cause of Christian unity, are thinking God is dead. We cannot tolerate this. So many in this present age have made their decision: "I will keep myself free from big sins even if my life is mediocre." We need the voice of Pope John, this Christian optimism, "The Lord is risen!" Why should we not hope great things from God? And this is our essential baptismal vow that we believe the Lord is risen and therefore we live under grace: to live in this confidence that what we are by baptism we can live ever better day by day. There will be battles and difficulties, but surely we can live this spirit with the joy of our faith. We must give honor to God by hoping great things from God.

In regard to priestly vocations, during the past twenty years I have been often asked by young seminarians what I am thinking concerning their vocation. I would tell them not to go ahead if they didn't believe that God had called them to sanctity, if they are not sincerely striving for holiness. Convert yourself first and be a good Christian. You must make this conversion to faith. But if one has here or there a difficulty, possibly obedience sometimes is hard for him, sometimes he is impatient, even

his own sexuality is a big problem for him, if he is sincere with himself and with God and if he believes "Christ is risen", if he believes the Lord can change him and help him and can do great things in his life; then he can go ahead. He will not be a bad priest.

4. Baptism teaches us Apostolic Zeal for non-Christians.

As the last point of our meditation of baptism, grace teaches us apostolic zeal for non-Christians. By non-Christian we mean all those who are not baptized or do not know the great reality of baptism. The Church doesn't allow children to be baptized if there is no certitude, moral certitude, that the message of the baptism will be brought to the child. It is normal that at least the parents are assisting at baptism. Those who must explain the message of baptism should realize what happens with their child by the sacrament. And the whole parish should know that they, representing the whole Catholic Church by their faith, must bring the good tidings. If one knows the Good Tidings of baptism how could he not feel the zeal in himself to bring these Good Tidings to those baptised who do not know the reality of baptism? How could he not bring these Good Tidings to all men?

If one lives baptism in the joy of Christian life, he must feel the vocation of the whole Church to bring the fullness of life to all men. We are baptized into the solidarity of Christ not only with those who are within the Church but we are also in the fullest solidarity with those for whom Christ has died. All are called to eternal life. There is no hope of a renewal of the parish, diocese, or a country if there is not present a strong missionary spirit and effort to bring the Good Tidings to fellowmen, to those in the same country and those in the world.

Take the good example of Cardinal Cushing in his efforts for Latin America, where so many baptized do not know the meaning of their baptism. We consider dollars as extremely necessary to our system. But they wouldn't be nearly as necessary if we had the missionary spirit which can awaken in us the full awareness of the greatness of our vocation. You have so many priests in the United States, thank God. Some dioceses are overflowing. You should send many more for mission work in Latin America and to all countries where missions must be preached. In addition, you must all do more for the unity of Christians by mere gratitude and joy of the chosen people of God. You must learn the method, learn right thinking in regard to charity, and feel it is the normal vocation of all Christians. If you are a parish priest you must do your best especially by the witness of your faith and joy to awaken religious vocations, brothers and sisters not only for your own diocese but also for mission work. It is a very bad sign if a parish priest has no interest for mission work. He is not a good Catholic, not even a good Christian. He doesn't realize what baptism is. So often it is quoted during the past few years and rightly so the Epistle of St. Peter 2:9 that we are a chosen race, God's

own, a royal priesthood. But often only this part is quoted and not the whole context of the preaching of St. Peter explaining these words: "That you may proclaim the perfections of Him Who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." If one knows what baptism is and is joyful, he will always do what he can to awaken the missionary spirit.

I was preaching a retreat outside of Germany at which I related an experience I had in Germany. In an assembly of all the priests of the diocese the Vicar-General had said that if there is a vocation in the parish the priest must send him to the diocesan seminary and not to a congregation of missionaries. One of the priests rose and asked: "Do you not share the office of the bishop? Are you not the "alter ego" of the bishop? I ask you now in the presence of all my confreres, has the bishop not received the mission to go out to the whole world and preach the Gospel." The Vicar-General responded: "I repeat, one must send them to our own diocesan seminary. I'm only responsible for my own diocese." I related this during the retreat and afterwards one of the priests came to me and said: "Father, how did you have the courage to say that in the presence of the Vicar-General as if it were the story of another?" I didn't know my courage because I had no idea that it happened also in that diocese.

It seems that it sometimes happens that we have priests and even Vicar-Generals who take no care of this great mission of the whole Catholic Church. But this is an exigency of all baptized people! Those who have the message for the baptized must have this mission to awaken vocations for the world mission of the Church. Our parishes must be radiant, must be attractive for all non-believers and especially for Christians who believe in baptism but do not know the Catholic Church. Our Church must be radiant for all men! We cannot personally awaken to the full joy of the faith of baptism if at the same time we do not awaken this missionary zeal and awaken the generosity of all Catholics, especially those called to bring the Good Tidings efficaciously to others.

I feel that it is very necessary to tell you this, and I ask you not to forget it. Bring it into your prayer and make a firm resolution in your priesthood and diocese to work by your witness and by word and deeds for this spirit, because it has the blessing of God that brings a blessing to your life and keeps you alive and joyful. That Spirit brings joy to many other faithful and a blessing to your country. I say this everywhere. I spoke on this same point in my retreat at the Vatican--the greatness of the vocation of those who govern the Church to do their best for the missions. But I feel it is even more important to young Americans. Your country has a political mission in the world today. That mission is from God and you must fulfill it. But your country will not fulfill this great task (this is my conviction) if American Catholics (such a strong and organized Catholicity) do not realize that they have a greater task for the whole world in spreading the Gospel. If you understand this and bring it to your prayer, I feel this retreat will be blessed by God. Amen.

Meditation VI

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

"On the last and solemn day of the feast, Jesus stood erect and cried out: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me will, as the Scripture has said, himself become a fountain out of which streams of living water are flowing forth.' He meant by this the Spirit whom those who believed in him were destined to receive. As yet there was no outpouring of the Spirit because Jesus was not yet glorified."

John 7:37-40

That the Spirit had not yet been given does not mean that the Spirit would not have been working in the whole history of mankind. Pope John in one of his last talks declared that he, the humble servant of God, believes and will repeat that the Holy Spirit does work everywhere. Wherever there is good will the Spirit is working. But St. John says the Spirit had not yet been given in this eschatological fullness, abundantly poured forth, as the Epistle to Titus says, in our hearts.

The prophet Jeremias in a great vision saw the new covenant and as characteristic of the new covenant that God would write His law into our inmost hearts, into the depths of our minds. Fifteen or twenty years later, the prophet Ezechial repeatedly proclaimed the same prophecy, that at the end of days, the time of the Messiah, God would give His law into our hearts and write it into the depths of our minds. But he explained it more fully by saying that He will give us a new Spirit, a new heart. Finally Ezechial in the prophecy says: "I will give them My own Spirit." The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes twice this prophecy of Jeremias and modern biblical scholars find that St. Paul in many of his letters referred to these two great prophets.

The Spirit, "pneuma", is the gift of self. It is the wisdom of God, but the wisdom of God is the glory of His love: that the Father gives Himself into His Word and the Word returns Himself to the Father as a gift of Himself. This giving of the Father and this return by the Son is so tremendous, so powerful total that it is the Third Divine Person. In the mystery of salvation it became visible what it means to give oneself, not in selfish desire, not in seeking one's own glory and will, but in giving oneself totally in love. The Resurrection made visible how acceptable was this surrendering and giving of the Son. It is a great sign that the sacrifice of the Head of the new mankind was accepted by the Father.

St. Paul in II Corinthians says that the "Kurios", the Risen Lord, is Pneuma, Spirit. He as Head of the human race is that total sign in His humanity of redeemed men. His Spirit is totally given; He has shed His blood. He is accepted as sacrifice, as gift of Himself. Only when this great mystery became factual, when it became full reality in this world, did it become evident what it means to be anointed by the Spirit, to be "The Messiah", the "Christos", the "Anointed One". Only after giving Himself, showing Himself to be the "High Priest" as sacrifice and as victim, does Christ send the Spirit from the Father.

In our theology I feel that the Holy Spirit does not occupy the same place He occupies in Scripture. After the retreat which I had the honor to preach to the Holy Father at the Vatican, the Holy Father very emphatically said to me: "For me personally, I've made a strong resolution to give a proper place to the Holy Spirit, to have the greatest possible veneration for the Holy Spirit." Four weeks before the death of Pope John, a Cardinal who was very close to Pope John told me something wonderful as a full characterization of his great humility he never makes himself an obstacle to the working of the Holy Spirit." Pope John, at a time when things weren't going well and he had signed a draft he didn't like, said to a friend: "It would be right that the Holy Father be obedient to the Holy Spirit, but sometimes he is obedient to the Roman Monsignori."

It is the Spirit Who renews the face of the earth. All the wonderful works of Christ were done in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the power of the Spirit He went into the desert in preparation for His ministry and He began preaching in Nazareth: "Spiritus Domini super me", the Spirit of Yahweh is upon Me. The Spirit has anointed Me and sent Me to preach the Good Tidings to the poor ones. The significance of His baptism in the Jordan was revealed by the coming of the Holy Spirit in the appearance of a dove; the Spirit came upon Him. It was also in the power of the Holy Spirit that He offered Himself to the Father: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Only through the Spirit does he make our life and our law His very own life. We are Christians, anointed by the Spirit Whom He has sent abundantly upon us.

Though it is a strange question, some moralists ask if Christians are obliged under mortal sin to receive the sacrament of confirmation. They declare that it is not so important because it is not necessary for one's individual salvation. I would never go to southern Italy where 35% of the baptized do not receive confirmation and say that one is obliged under mortal sin to receive the sacrament. But what I would do and wish that all bishops would do is never to miss any occasion to preach in a most joyful way the Good Tidings of the Easter mystery where Christ has given Himself in the power of the Spirit in order to send the Spirit upon us and renew the face of the earth and in order to bring us peace and to teach us the fullness of His love.

Christ is the great teacher of the New Law. He was teaching it on the Mount of the Beatitudes; He was teaching it in the Cenacle; He was teaching it on Calvary. Yet in the Cenacle during His last discourse Christ said: "I have very much to tell you but you cannot yet bear it. But when the Spirit comes upon you, you will understand what I have been teaching you."

A man may learn this during a good four years of theology and continue to learn it for forty years more, but if he is not a spiritual man, if he does not trust in the work of the Spirit, if he is not docile and does not invoke Him as the real Master; then he has done nothing else but misuse theology for four years and for forty years. He becomes a dead body. Only if the Spirit opens his mind and heart, renews him and makes him a spiritual man, docile and humble and giving himself to Christ; only then can he understand the Law of the Lord proclaimed on the Mount and proclaimed within the Eucharist: "Love one another as I have loved you." Christ loved us as the Anointed One, as the High Priest anointed to give Himself, to be the gift of Himself, to be glorified as the acceptable gift of Himself.

We must realize in our life the importance of the sacrament of confirmation and of veneration of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit Who made Christ the "martyr", the "witness". Christ could say to His Apostles "You shall be My witness until the ends of the earth" because He promised them the Spirit. Only a spiritual man who accepts the abundant gift of Christ which is the Spirit as the rule of life, and lets himself be led by this Spirit in docility and humility, and tries to give himself totally: only such a man will be a witness and will bear testimony for Christ unto the ends of the earth. It is quite important to study Scripture with this viewpoint. I recommend two books of my confrere, Father Durwell, The Mystery of Resurrection, and In the Redeeming Christ. The real synthesis of the Easter mystery can only be seen in the light of what is said about the Spirit Who anointed Christ and Who has anointed us.

In baptism we have already received the Holy Spirit, but it is just a beginning. Confirmation makes it fully evident what baptism means. Confirmation is the continuation of the work of God; He gives us the Holy Spirit in the greatest abundance in confirmation. All we have considered in our meditation on baptism receives its full meaning only after meditating on confirmation. In this sacrament we see that the gifts of God are the rules of our life. St. Thomas in the Summa Theologiae I-II, q.106 says: "Principaliter lex nova est ipsa gratia Spiritus Sancti qui datur Christo fidelibus." This is the fundamental reality of the new law: the grace of the Spirit given to the faithful. St. Thomas in his commentary on II Corinthians, the third chapter, writes that the new covenant is a covenant of the Spirit Who is poured forth in our hearts. So it is the Spirit which perfects that love in us which is the fulfillment of the new law.

There is no opposition between the formulation of the new law and the eternal reality. How wonderful is the manner in which ^{Christ} proclaimed His law in the Sermon on the Mount! He proclaimed His law through His Gospel so that His law is always Gospel and His Gospel is always the rule of law. He did this not only by words but by example until the shedding of His blood for us. Yet this is not the primary aspect of the new law. It is only as St. Thomas says "quasi secundarium in lege nova". Yet this secundarium in lege nova is infinitely great and wonderful if seen in relation to the primary aspect. St. Augustine each year preached this primary aspect to the newlyborn children of God who at the same time received the sacrament of confirmation: "Now the new law is promulgated in your hearts. You have received the Holy Spirit." The Fathers of the Church likewise insists that the great day for the proclamation of the new law was Pentecost. Only on Pentecost could the Apostles grasp the full meaning of the Sermon on the Mount and the new law proclaimed at the Last Supper. So too, only a man who is deeply aware of the present working of the Spirit in his heart, a man who is docile to the Spirit and grateful for His gifts, can understand the real meaning of the Sermon on the Mount and the Gospel as rule of life for the baptized.

For Christian morality it is essential to see this unity. There have been from the time of St. Paul until our time (and most probably will be until the Parousia) two dangerous tendencies. One tendency is to see only the Spirit: illumination, private revelation, direct absolute inspiration of the Spirit. Some people like to follow their own spirit considering it the Holy Spirit. They recognize no external law. They accept the Spirit but a Spirit that can only be proved by themselves. The second tendency is no less serious; to reduce the law to the letter of formulation, that is, the external law. The written law of the Gospel, that is, the law proclaimed by our Lord is life and spirit because it was proclaimed through the anointed one. This law was proclaimed at the same time as the promise of the spirit and it is proclaimed by the Church which has received the same Spirit. Thus it is essential to see this unity; to see on one side the deep inmost reality of those baptized by the fire of the Holy Spirit and this Spirit working in them; and on the other side to see the external law proclaimed by the witness of Christ, by his life, death and works. Especially must we see those laws proposed as the highlight of His preaching in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Last Discourse which are the external explanation of the inmost realities. These words received their full meaning only if they lead to the eternal reality. Here there is a wonderful analogy to the Sacraments. If one knows only the rubrics, even knows them perfectly, he is not yet a man who knows liturgy. When Pope John was at Sancta Maria Majora he wished to give his blessing outside the church because there so many people. He asked his assistant, "Give me a stole!" His assistant said it was not possible. If the Pope gives his blessing outside church he needs this and this. The Holy Father patiently listened and then said: "But Father now

please, give me a stole. "but the assistant explained once more that it wasn't possible. Pope John again patiently listened and said: "Now, please, give me a stole for I am the Pope, not you."

The whole liturgy becomes meaningless if one doesn't see that these external signs lead to the internal. They are signs and thus must be grasped in their significance. They must lead to what they signify. The sacraments tell us of the wonderful work of Christ which unites the people of God and leads all to holiness. So with moral teaching, both scientific and pastoral; the whole teaching must lead to this tremendous inmost reality, the presence of the Holy Spirit and the working of His grace in our heart.

At the same time, says Thomas, the law presented in the Gospel and taught by the Church is a sign of discretion. If one has a spirit in opposition to the Sermon on the Mount, if he has another liberty, it is proof that it is his own spirit and not the Holy Spirit. The sacrament of confirmation teaches us the law of the Spirit because by it we receive the Spirit, the Law of Christ, the law of love. He is the Law of Love because He is the Person who is called the Bond of Love, on unity, between the Father and the Son, and He is the bond of unity of Christians.

The observer for the Quakers at the Vatican Council said to me: "I see only one thing that can lead Christians together. We must live an internal life. We must learn from one another; we from the Catholics, and you from us, to live a spiritual life. Then the Holy Spirit will lead us towards unity." I think he has really grasped the meaning of ecumenism. No method helps if we do not become spiritual men, if we do not try to live this wonderful life the Spirit is working in us because He is the Bond of unity.

Here we have one of the greatest signs of discretion of the Spirit. We must consider everything in using our individual gifts and capabilities in this light: "Does it build up the unity and friendship of all, that is, the solidarity of all Christians, does it serve for the union of Christians?" We must learn to give ourselves. That is the chief teaching of Christ, the Anointed One, upon Whom has descended the fulness of the Spirit. That is also the basic teaching of confirmation. We have not just to give some small things to God (some actions, some signs of obedience), but we must give our whole self to God. We must give ourselves if it is necessary for our neighbor. Only then are we witnesses, "Martyrs". Then we are really sent by Christ in the power of the Spirit.

St. Thomas explains the meaning of Pentecost well. The Holy Spirit was given under the sign of tongues of fire. If one learns the language of the children of God, he speaks with the bonds of charity. Language is given for communication. One does not live truth if he tells true things to his neighbor to deceive him. One learns truth if he gives himself, and one can give self only if he is docile to the Holy Spirit. Following this explanation St. Thomas states that the symbol of confirmation, as the Church is now

celebrating it, had the same significance as the fire of the first Pentecost.

One does not live for himself; one does not please himself! As Christ lived for all mankind, so the spiritual man knows that his salvation is communal, in the service of his neighbor and the community. This basic meaning of the spiritual law, of the Law of the Spirit, is the condition for the law of liberty. It's essential to note how the Pauline and Johannine approaches are really one. St. John always preaches unity and peace which prepares the preaching of Paul and the law of liberty. Liberty is only meaningful for those living in unity. In Paul one observes solidarity, the bond of peace, and the real liberty of the children of God.

A director of a Roman college complained to me that he runs into great trouble with his young seminarians. They have discovered the "law of liberty" from the Council. And some occasions where they apply it are: the meals are not good enough; the building is not modern enough; they are not given permission to go home when they wish. They cannot quote the Council whose spirit is one of solidarity and unity. These young fellows should not speak in the name of others. If the quarrels begin with meals, that they have not the best wine and food, there is already proof that it is the spirit of the flesh and not the Holy Spirit. The quarrels begin because the life is not easy enough. But if they would begin a dialogue with their director as to how they can improve, make their liturgy better, etc., he would like to hear from them. But there are so many who come like this: "Now, with the Council, the director must give us the meals we wish."

If we are not mortified, if we have not put to death the desires of the lower nature, the desire of the egoist to make himself the center; then we can never speak about the law of liberty. Only if one has put to death the old ego, the lower nature; only if he makes himself the loving servant of the community; only if he works in all things for the Mystical Body of Christ: then he has grasped what it means to be free, not to be under law but under grace. Amen.

Meditation VII

THE SACRAMENT OF PENNANCE

"After they had breakfasted, Jesus said to Simon Peter: 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' 'Yes, my lord,' he replied; 'you know that I really love you.' 'Then,' Jesus said to him, 'feed my lambs.' He asked him a second time: 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' 'Yes, my lord,' he replied, 'you know that I really love you.' 'Then,' he said to him, 'be a shepherd to my sheep.' For the third time he put the question to him: 'Simon, son of John, do you really love me?' It grieved Peter that he had asked him the third time: 'Do you really love me?' and he replied: 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I really love you!' 'Then,' Jesus said to him, 'feed my sheep. I tell you the plain truth: when you were young, you used to put on your girdle and go where you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your arms for someone else to gird you and carry you where you have no wish to go.' He said this to signify the kind of death by which he was to glorify God. And having said this, he said to him: 'Follow me.' "

John 21: 15-19

Simon Peter was given, not by flesh, not by human inspiration but by the Father in heaven, to make this glorious confession and to be the first in this profession of the creed: "You are the Anointed, the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In return he was permitted to hear: "Simon, son of John, you are blessed indeed. You did not learn that from mortal men but it was revealed to you by the heavenly Father." Once more Peter was allowed to speak in the name of the eleven who had faith in the Lord: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Your words are the words of eternal life. We have faith and we know that You are the Holy One of God."

Who would have thought that after such a deep and solemn oath of fidelity: "Lord, if all would leave you I shall not leave you," that on the very evening he had received the Bread of life and was ordained to the priesthood, Peter would say: "I do not know the man."

During this third apparition after the Resurrection our Lord gave Peter the occasion for another profession coming from a deeper humility and a heart that was purified by this humiliating experience Peter was deeply sorrowful that the Lord for the third time asked

him "Do you love Me?" But now he really believes not only that the Lord is the "Anointed One" but that He was anointed to be the sacrifice and die for him. It means something quite new for him when he confesses for the third time: "You know that I love you." Now Peter was permitted to hear it again in quite a new understanding: "Follow Me!:"

This is the confession of Peter. It was a great day and a tremendous sign of the mercy of the Lord, a mercy that does not withdraw the privileges but shows the abundant love of the Lord. We have made through the mouth of our godparents the solemn vow of baptism: "You are the Anointed, the Son of the Living God and we are your property." We have renewed this vow in our first solemn communion and often in our life we have celebrated the new and eternal covenant and by celebrating it have professed, within view of the whole Church, that we are members of Christ, that we love Him. But in the hour of temptation was it not as if we also had said: "I do not know the man." How could we have sinned if we would have known the Man of Sorrow, the Anointed Who died for us?

After sinning we cannot celebrate with the joy of the baptized the great covenant of eternal life--the Eucharist. We must go through the humble confession of our sins as Peter to renew our love and to profess the faith. And like Peter we are permitted to hear that same word of forgiveness, the word of peace.

What is the sacrament of Penance.. What is our confession? It is first an encounter with the suffering Christ, a confession in the face of His death. Secondly, it is a confession before Christ Who is our judge. Thirdly, it is an encounter with the power of the Resurrection. Confession is the hope of our own resurrection.

1. An Encounter with the Suffering Christ.

Our sins are also an encounter with Christ. Even when running from Christ, running to the things of this world against the order of the love of God, we are always encountering him once and forever for He wishes to be forever united with us. Our sins affect him and hurt him. His sorrow on the Mount of Olives and the sorrow in His cry on the cross "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me", is the sorrow stemming from our sins. As we have been closely fitted into the pattern of His death, it is impossible not to encounter the Lord even with our sins. He has said it already through Isaiah 50: "An attentive ear the Lord has given me. I offered my body defenseless to the man who would smite me. I would not turn away my face when they spat upon me and reviled me."

We hurt Him with all the sins we are committing against our neighbor by being possessive over him, by neglecting their eternal salvation, by saying "He's old enough! Let him take care of himself;" by all these acts we are hurting the Lord. "Saul, Saul

why do you persecute Me?" My Lord, what shall I do? Shall I say with the Hebrews: "The mountains fall upon us, and the hills come upon us, for these things are done when the wood is green. What will happen when the wood is dry?" O Lord, through my sins I am wood that is dry! Where shall I go? It is the Lord Himself who invites us to return to a better encounter. To Isaias He says: "I am your Redeemer. Today I will redeem you. I know you." It is our joy and gratitude that makes us say at the steps of the altar and also when going to the sacrament of penance: "Wait for God's help. I will not cease to praise Him in humble confession." It is the grace of God and one of his greatest gifts that, after this terrible encounter in which we hurt the Lord by our sins, He has allowed us a new encounter with Himself, an encounter like that of St. Peter. When the Lord looked upon Peter after his unbelievable words: "I do not know the man": Peter went away in tears and sorrow that purified his false self-confidence and led him truly to the Lord.

In the sacrament of penance we are permitted an encounter as St. Peter who was grieved that the Lord asked him three times because of his three-fold sin: "Do you really love Me?" The sacrament of penance is not just a matter of telling our sins. The challenging fact is that we can look at the eyes of our Lord as did Peter and with full sincerity say: "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love You." The sacrament of penance becomes a saving encounter with Christ through deep contrition.

I ask you to make a resolution that whenever you neglected an invitation of the grace of God, whenever you act knowing that you do not please the Lord in this way; take the time to go to chapel or to your room and make a deep act of sorrow before you do anything else. If this is the only resolution you make during this retreat, the retreat will be valuable because you are on the downward road whenever you feel that you could please the Lord and yet do not. You must make an act of sorrow as sincerely as possible. With this act of sorrow express your confidence in the mercy of God. Every evening also make a deep act of sorrow-- a real encounter with the Lord suffering for you. Let us not just repeat a formula. To awaken a lively encounter with the Lord, look into hell with your eyes of faith and realize that they are there because in their sorrow they would not go to the Lord. All are there because they were egoists, closed with themselves. They would not open their wounds to the Lord. Look at the beatitude of heaven, the millions of saints who were sinners like us, but were saved because they opened their hearts and wounds. They were granted this saving encounter with the Lord through a deep sorrow and an upright confession. As soon as possible (and this must be one of our strongest resolutions, as soon as possible), do this after a fault. As you are favored, as you have received Baptism by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and as you know the Gospel, you must know also that it is a sin if one is conscious that "this is the way I could please the Lord" and one acts in the opposite manner. Whenever you take the grace of God for nothing,

you need an act of deep sorrow.

Every contrition has a sacramental structure. We dare to go to the Lord with confidence only because He has given us these great signs of mercy: the Blessed Virgin who is the Mother of mercy, the Church our merciful Mother, and the sacrament of penance in which He in the power of His death and resurrection says to us "Follow me. I forgive you your sins."

Do not let your confession become routine and a superficial repetition of external acts. Confession is an encounter with the Lord. Do your best in prayer and humility, purified by sorrow as St. Peter, to find Him and look into His eyes declaring: "O my God, you know everything. You know that I love You." This is the sincere purpose: to change your life and truly manifest it by the act of trying to love Him sincerely and uprightly by your deeds.

I recommend to you, as all the doctors of the spiritual life do, to make a special purpose for each confession, there is always the universal purpose to strive for sanctity but that can remain very confused. This purpose should always be essentially present, but there should be a special point so that you can easily know that here I can, must, and will change. Tell it to your confessor so that for each confession you can tell him how faithfully you fulfilled the resolution. Let the resolution not just be an avoidance of evil. We, as Christians, see beatitude as a positive reality of life. Therefore, our purpose must become more and more positive. Also, it should not be an arbitrary resolution but one that is needed. Allow your confessor to help you if you cannot find a resolution fitted for you.

Our confession is an encounter with the suffering Christ, a confession in view of His death.

2. An Encounter with Christ our Judge.

Because he is the holy God, the Lord must judge and condemn every sin. Judgements of God in the terrible wars and murders of men and in all the evils of this world are only a small thing in comparison with the last judgement when the Lord is coming to judge the living and the dead. It is sometimes good for us, even at times very necessary, to face this great truth that the Lord is a judge. He didn't come to condemn the world but came to save it. All those who may be in hell must confess it for all eternity that He wished to save them but they rebuke him. They didn't go to His merciful judgement. Isaias 33 states: "Dominus iudex est" and then adds "He himself will be our deliverance." It is in and through judgement that He is our deliverance.

It was in the terrible judgement of the cross that the Father has condemned sin. Here we can see how God hates and condemns sin. The Only-Begotten Son-made-man has borne the judgement for us. To Him has been given all judgement in heaven and on earth. Because of this his judgement can deliver us from evil. A choice is open to us (especially expressed by our confession) between the merciful judgement of the confession or the terrible judgement on the last day. If one doesn't confess knowing his sin, he says to the Lord: "I can wait until the last day of your great judgement.: But if one in humility and confidence confesses his sins, he hears the words of the Lord looking to that last day of judgement: "Stand upright, and hold your heads high, for your liberation is near." If we put our hearts, words, and acts under the judgement of the cross; if we confess humbly our sins and try to correct our life: then to us it is said: "Stand upright and hold your heads high because the last day, the day of judgement, is your liberation." Such a tremendous change is the transformation of the terrible judgement into a saving judgement!

We confess our sins through the sacrament of penance to the One who is our Judge. How should we confess? In every sin there is outspoken or implicit our own judgement that says to God: "I know better what is good for me." Man says to God in every sin; "I prefer my own desire to the law of Your grace." In sin by his deeds, words, and thoughts man implicitly says to God: "Thy law is not good. I will make a better law for myself." Man glorifies himself and makes himself the Lord and judge of the law of God. In confession we give glory to God and confess that "Thy law, O Lord, is holy; Thy commandment is just and good." But this must flow from a humble heart and be an expression of a firm purpose.

The sacrament of penance is cult, that is, liturgy. It is not only a remedy for sin. The sacrament will only be efficacious if viewed first as an opportunity to adore and praise the Lord in His justice by humble confession: "Thy law is holy, good, just and spiritual." It will be efficacious if viewed as an opportunity to praise his mercy. The sacrament is a solemn proclamation through the priest of the mercy of the Holy One. It is also a solemn proclamation of His justice through the imposition of a penance, but essentially it is the proclamation of His mercy. The priest and penitent should unite themselves in this liturgical act of praising God. The Council of Trent, following St. Thomas, says that the proclamation of forgiveness through the priest and the humble confession of the penitent are like "forma and materia" and like soul and body they must be united. The confessor and penitent together must praise the Lord, adore His justice, praise His law, and especially praise the mercy of God.

3. An Encounter with the Power of the Resurrection.

The sacrament is an encounter with the Risen Lord. The confession of Peter began immediately after his sin of denial when the Lord looked upon him in the sadness of His Passion. But it was only fulfilled when the Glorious Lord met him and asked him: "Do you love Me?" It was to the Risen Lord that Peter in humility but also in gratitude declared: "You know everything, you know that I am your friend."

The sacrament of penance is an Easter sacrament. It is a gift of the risen Lord to His Church through which he purifies the Church of sinners and prepares the great day of His coming when he will have prepared His Church in the full splendor of purity and holiness. On the very day of His Resurrection He visited His poor Apostles who almost all had sinned against His Passion, had run away from the cross, and now ashamed were hidden behind closed doors. To their consolation he proclaimed "shalom", "Peace be with you."

I think you saw on television the tremendous reaction created when Pope Paul greeted the people of Palestine with the word "shalom". In this word is embodied all their hopes, the hope of a people suffering through the centuries.

This word doesn't only mean peace among the races. The whole Messianic hope is in this one word, "shalom:". When the Risen Lord came to the Apostles and brought them this good tidings, "shalom", he explained that now all the hopes of Israel are fulfilled. When they saw the Lord they were filled with joy at this great message "shalom". He repeated it solemnly: "Peace be with you, as the Father has sent me, with the same love and with the same power to bring peace, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive any man's sins they stand forgiven." It is the Easter message.

Our moralism has provoked a crisis in regard to the sacrament of penance. Very many Christians only accept the sacrament unwillingly or forget it for so many years. They were only taught what they had to do: especially how to scrupulously confess with "integritas materialis". Some priests also in administering the sacrament are just concerned with bringing together the material integrity.

In our congregation there was an old father who died last year. We were good friends: I was nice to him and he was nice to me. He defined heaven as the place where one no longer had to go to confession. I spoke to the Father-Provincial and said he should create a heaven on earth for this old priest. So he spared him from any obligation to go to confession. Then the old priest one day told me, "Father, I feel like I am in heaven." One time I said to him, "Father, I understand you. You have a wonderful

heart, you have kindness. You also were, however, a very faithful disciple of the moralist. You believed everything. Therefore, you were constantly torn between two poles. On the one side was the necessity of imposing this tremendous integrity, to judge as you were taught, and on the other side was your good golden heart. So you had to suffer.: He looked at me and said: "Who told you that? Indeed, that was the case."

We must learn by our own experience what is the meaning of the sacrament of penance. Then we will not love anything more than the confessional for it is there as priest that we bring the good tidings "shalom", "Peace be with you." All other commandments must be integrated and balanced into this great command to bring the good news of peace to souls.

After the war I had to continuously give catechesis to adults and children so I made some research but always integrated in apostolic work. Everywhere I would ask the children: "What is the most important thing in the sacrament of penance?" And always they replied, "contrition". And I would say, "I know something still greater." After the adults attempted the answer the smallest child who had been prepared for her first confession by her mother replied: "What Jesus does. He forgives me my sins." Something must be lacking in our catechesis that people know perhaps but do not have present that this is an action of Christ, a powerful change made by God. The five acts we perform in confession are given meaning by this power of the Resurrection when we know that it is an encounter with the Lord, with the powerful word, "shalom".

It is the "peace" that Ezechial in a wonderful vision was allowed to see. "The hand of the Lord was upon me and brought me forth in the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones. And he led me about through them on every side. Now they were very many upon the face of the plain and they were exceeding dry. And he said to me: Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live? And I answered: O Lord God, thou knowest. And he said to me: Prophecy concerning these bones and say to them: Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will send spirit into you and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you and will cause flesh to grow over you and will cover you with skin: and I will give you spirit and you shall live. And you shall know that I am the Lord. And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a commotion. And the bones came together, each one to its joint. And I saw, and behold the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin was stretched out over them: but there was no spirit in them. And he said to me: Prophecy to the spirit, prophecy, O son of man, and say to the spirit: Thus saith the Lord God: Come, spirit, from the four winds and blow upon these slain and let them live again.

And I prophesied as he had commanded me: and the spirit came into them, and they lives: and they stood up upon their feet, and exceeding great army." (Ezechial 37: 1-10_

It is the vision of the prophet who sees the great resurrection as fulfilled at the end of time. All this God prepares for his chosen people through his forgiveness, through the sacrament of Easter, the sacrament of mercy.

You must change your heart and mind and believe the Gospel. The sacrament teaches us this. You must not remain within the categories of moralism, not see only your own efforts. You must believe the Gospel, the Good Tidings, efficaciously coming from the Risen Lord. This will change our heart and mind! This gives meaning to all our efforts because these efforts are already a gift of God. They are the sign of the power of the Resurrection! Amen.

Meditation VIII

THE SACRAMENTS AND DEATH

"Be patient, then, brother, until the coming of the Lord. Think how the farmer waits for the precious crop of the land. He is patient with it until the fall and spring rains come. You, too, should be patient; strengthen your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is near. Do not complain against one another, brothers, that you may not be judged. Remember the Judge stands at your gates. Brother, take as models of patience in hardships the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. See how we call them blessed for having remained patient. You have heard of Job's patience, and you know the outcome brought about by the Lord, because the Lord is full of mercy and compassion. But above all, brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth, by any other oath. Rather let your Yes really be Yes, and your No really No, that you may not fall under condemnation.

Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone cheerful? He should sing a psalm. Is anyone of you sick? He should call in the presbyters of the Church, and have them pray over him, while they anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. That prayer, said with faith, will save the sick person, and the Lord will restore him to health. If he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed."

Epistle of James 5:7-16

In 1929 the famous German philosopher Schler changed universities, leaving the Catholic university of Cologne for the liberal university of Frankfurt. He, who was to be the great hope of Catholicism, had built up a new religion of the flesh. After his first lecture of introduction at Frankfurt he ended: "Tomorrow we will speak on death." All were anxiously awaiting for what he would say. But instead of the professor, someone else entered the lecture hall and announced: "Scheler has just died." It was his shortest lecture but perhaps the deepest lesson he gave to his students.

Death is not an abstract thing to be treated abstractly. It

can only be faced in the reality of life and death. I feel God spoke on death to you this past week showing you the reality that the Apostle James reminds us of "The Lord is at hand." (Ed. note: Shortly before Fr. Haring's retreat at the American college during Holy Week one of our own brothers in Christ had died. The seminarians on retreat indeed understood the reality Fr. Haring makes reference to in this meditation). But not only the death of a dear friend touches us and speaks to us. There is One Who speaks much more intimately on our death in greater nearness and with the power of His own death--that is our Lord. Celebrating the Eucharist, it is the Lord Himself who reminds us: "I died for you and therefore I live for you. This is My body which is given unto death for you. This cup poured out for you is the New Covenant sealed in My blood shed on the cross. "Do this in a memorial to me." St. Paul in I Corinthians explains: "For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes." The Lord speaks of His death but He speaks here also of your death and my death. He took upon Himself the most terrible death in order to bless the hour of our own death. Eating from this meal prepared by the death of the Lord, we are growing together by His death.

All the sacraments speak of the death of our Lord and of our own death. The sacrament of baptism speaks forcefully and speaks continually in language written in our hearts, proclaiming to us the death of our Lord and of our death because we are baptized into His death. If we put to death the desires of the lower nature, if we die to self-centeredness and live the life of Christ; then we are already living in the power of His resurrection. The day of our death will reveal if we have lived up to our baptism, if we have died to self-adoration, if we lived with the Risen Lord.

The sacrament of confirmation speaks of the death of our Lord and of our death. He is the Anointed One, anointed with the plenitude of the Holy Spirit to be the "witness" (martyr) of the love of God and of neighbor by His death. He was anointed to shed His blood to make clear the meaning of being anointed, to be a testimony, a martyr. So with the sacrament of confirmation, when God abundantly poured out His Spirit into our hearts, He made us his "witnesses". But one cannot be a witness together with Christ if one first thinks of his own health in all circumstances, if his greatest worry is to be healthy, to drink well, and to sleep well. If we always wish to sleep well, how can we resemble a father or mother who sometimes cannot sleep because they must watch over their sick children? How can we be good spiritual men if we are so concerned with our health, if we invoke the fifth commandment only as a physician and not in the meaning of the sermon on the Mount which tells us that one has to give his life for his brethren? The hour of our death will manifest if we were spiritual men. If our life was a "witness" to the Lord, if our life was one of love of God and neighbor; then we will regard death as the greatest chance to fulfill this "witness:" to commit our soul at death into the hands of the Lord for the glory of the Father and for the salvation of men. All

our life will be a qualified life and not a "testimony" if we are not ready to constantly repeat "Adsum" when God calls us. We have to prepare ourselves by being "witnesses" everyday for that great witnessing at the hour of our death.

The sacrament of penance reminds us that the Lord has taken upon Himself our sins. It recalls the reality of baptism, that we are baptized into His death and we cannot rid ourselves of the misery of sin if we do not wish to be fitted into the pattern of His death. St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas teach that the sacrament of penance gives a new configuration to the death of our Lord. There is a new motive or reason to put to death the desires of the lower nature and to face the problems of our life, facing the death of our Lord and facing the hour of our own death.

The sacrament of marriage, which is not ours, has much to say on the hour of death for us who, through celibacy, become in a very special way fitted into the mystery of the spouses of Christ with His Church--that mystery of fidelity until death separates us. Everywhere in the world there are some foolish priests (it is unavoidable, but I feel it is a thing that does great harm) who simply feel they can marry. That the Church can change the order of deaconate for married people, but the Church cannot dispense from the natural and divine law of fidelity. Those who have accepted celibacy in order to strengthen the witness and the fidelity of married people until death separates must know that the Church has no power to dispense from the obligation of fidelity and trustfulness. There are cases of incapability, of mental sickness, etc., but the Church can never give a cross and say: "I dispense you from fidelity." She could rather say with St. Thomas: "You can be saved if you bring as great a penance as was your sin against fidelity." We can be saved only through penance and conversion until death separates us. We must know as we take the oath of celibacy that celibacy unites us with all the troubles and struggles of married people for their fidelity. In facing difficulties we must be a radiant witness of fidelity to them unto death. This is the meaning of celibacy. It is not a promise for one or two years. St. Augustine says: "Those who have chosen celibacy for the kingdom of God have entered in a yet deeper way into the Church's fidelity to the Lord and the Lord's fidelity to the Church."

The sacrament of Holy Orders proclaims the mystery of the death of our Lord to us and teaches us concerning our own death. It tells us that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. We must spend ourselves but we must realize that all our organizational and administrative talents are nothing in comparison with the one thing in our life that we offer--our own death for the salvation of the world. Through His death the Lord has redeemed the world. Thus those who are priests offer their lives, but they must also offer the greatest hour of their life, their death, for the redemption of the world.

There is the final sacrament of the life of penance and mortification, that of the Anointing of the Sick with Viaticum. It is the last encounter with the Risen Lord Who in the power of His Resurrection reminds the dying person: "I died for you and I am living for you and I shall raise you from the dead."

Listen to this teaching of the sacraments. There is not an abstract teacher; it is the Lord Himself in his powerful presence, in His infinite love, Who continually teaches us the great reality of His death, uniting us with the power of His death and preparing the great and decisive hour of our life.

What is death? The physician gives clear definition. He doesn't give the moment but notes when all the elements of dissolution are present. But from the viewpoint of human experience there is a tremendous difference between one death and another. You will make this your own experience as priests. The parish priest on many occasions will see what death is like and how different death can be. I remember with great gratitude to God the great mystery of death I could feel during the war, that even poor fellows through the power of their religious life, in the great hour of their death even without Extreme Unction, embraced death saying: "Lord, here I am."

Holy Scripture reveals to us what death can be like. The one thief accused the Lord for his pains, blaspheming until his bones were broken; the other, a thief as himself, corrected him, accused himself and heard the words of consolation: "Today thou shalt see Me in Paradise."

What a difference there is even today? At the same time that our Lord died glorifying His Father, expressing His infinite love toward His enemies and sinners and committing His soul into the hands of the Father; at that same time, Judas, the poor disciple of Christ, after buying the field, hung himself so that his entrails flowed out. Both are death: the one, the greatest act of adoration of God, the greatest reality in the history of mankind, the most visible sign of the love of the Father; and the other, an act of desperation.

Facing this infinite distance between death and death we must actuate our whole life by this most lively question: What will my death be? What would my death be like now? Would it be the hour of fulfillment? Would it be the great readiness of the Adsum, Lord, here I am? Would it be a confident and joyful going Home? What will be your death? If you continue in these smaller and greater infidelities, with your self-centeredness, with your spirit of criticism, being hurtful against neighbor, what can be your death? We do not escape this question; we cannot escape it. Yet we face our life and the present moment, the present hour of grace, if we face clearly and uprightly this problem--what will be my death?

Will death be the fulfillment of our hope or will it be the hour of failure? Within the last 15 years of prosperity here in Europe there have been a number of planned bankruptcies. People plan them and save money from them, but they are artificial. Hitler and his friends did the same thing for power, even at the end of the war. Some human beings are living their life, planning the end of their life, as a bankruptcy, trying to save some pleasant hour for a life that can only be a bankruptcy if they continue like that. Isaiah 22 says: "The man who says let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." Tomorrow we die, the bankruptcy, therefore let us eat and drink. Years ago I had a disagreeable task. The Vicar-General asked me to admonish a 60 year old pastor not to hire a 19 year old housekeeper. I first explained the situation to her. She was quite reasonable in her reply: the pastor was in love with her and she wanted to please him for he felt he needed something from life. Then I met him after long prayers and he said to me: "I want something from life. I've lived 60 years and don't have anything in this life. I want something for my life!" There are priests with the most expensive things, good wines, good drinking, good eating, enough money, cigarettes, a nice car, etc, who still feel they are correct, that no one can reproach them. Those who are celebrating the mystery of the death and the resurrection of the Lord cannot say "I wish to have something for my life." "Death! how bitter is the thought of you to a man who lives at ease in his home." (Sir.41).

Quite different is the thought of the Apostle to the Gentiles: "Christ is my life and death, my gain". If Christ, through baptism, through the Eucharist, through our wonderful vocation, is in the highest way our life, then death cannot be anything else but the highest gain. This is the question for us: is it true, can we say this in sincerity to God, to our neighbor, that Christ is my life? That's the question and answer to the other question: "What will be my death?" St. Paul in Galatians 6:7-8 explains how we can resolve this great question: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. A man reaps just what he sows. Yes, he who sows in his corrupt nature, from that corrupt nature reaps corruption. But he who plants in the field of the spirit will will reap life everlasting." Are we or are we not spiritual men--that is the question. Do we yield ourselves to every desire? What is typical of many priests is yielding to the desire to smoke as much as possible, as much as his lower nature desires even if he desires 30 cigarettes on some days. He could send the money to some poor priest in the missions. He makes himself a slave...but it is a symptom for a thousand other things. Does one yield himself to his egoism so that even when it disturbs the bond of peace and unity he doesn't renounce his beautiful ideas. But if we are sowing in the field of the spirit; if our life is servability, that is, a giving of ourselves, then the spirit of the Risen Lord will make our life a rich harvest for eternal life.

St. Paul again gives the answer to the question "What will be my death?" in I Corinthians 3:10-14: "But each individual should be careful how he erects the superstructure. Of course, no other foundation can anyone lay than the one already laid, and that is Jesus Christ. Whoever builds on this foundation may use gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, or straw, but each individual's work will be made manifest. The day of the Lord will make it known because fire will lay it bare, and will test the quality of each individual's work." Have we recognized in all things that Christ is the foundation? Has our life really proclaimed Christ? Christ questions us through our works and deeds. The answer will be made manifest on the final day of judgment. Or are we burning with our own desires, acting through poor motives, destroying men through egoism rather than strengthening them through charity.

Let us be honest and face this supreme question of our life; what will be my death? If it comes tomorrow, or the next year, will it be the fulfillment of a holy life? As we are, at least for many of us, we can only hope that death will be a fulfillment through the mercy of the Lord.

On a very misty day in October 1941 we had returned from a terrible night. We had to attack the Russians in a village and lost many of our friends and in the morning we were attacked by many of their tanks and lost 50% of our men. We had saved our lives by running. I had to help--to the left, to the right. Then we made a new attack with new forces, but in vain. From all sides cried the men for a medic. I ran for a while until tired, and then I decided, "I remain as I am; I'm not doing anything more. I had had enough. A man can't do more than he is capable of." But then there came a cry from the neighboring company, a cry not only for this life. And I ran. It was a tall man from the Tyrol, desperately wounded. I told him, "Friend I am a Catholic priest. I bring you the body of the Lord." And he said, "Is it true that God sends a priest to such a miserable man as I am!" There was no pain to die. There was only the great wonder of God's mercy, now He is merciful! Later on I wrote to his parish, and his cousin, the priest, wrote me about him. He was a good man. Once, after a quarrel he left the Church and had not the courage to return, but wherever he could he helped--old people, etc., and always thought himself a miserable fellow.

God listens to the cry of a humble man. If we are humble: if we know we are behind; if we expect everything from the mercy of God, we can be sure that, at the hour of our death, He will give us a visible sign of His mercy, that He can purify our hearts and bring us to the total surrendering of ourselves. Pray--and face the problems of the day. Pray, that God gives us the full consciousness to hear the great message of Mother-Church, "through this holy anointing, and through His wonderful goodness and piety, may God forgive you whatever you have sinned." It is the greatest hour of a poor sinner. It is the great hour for a man, striving through a holy

life to a fulfillment in sanctity, if God Himself brings consolation, forgiveness and absolute certitude that He Himself is our salvation. Celebrating the Eucharist and the sacraments, let us listen to the great teaching of the Lord Who encounters us in the mercy of His death and the power and the glory of His resurrection.

Meditation IX

CHRIST AND THE MEANING OF DEATH

"It was now about noon, and darkness fell upon the whole land. It lasted till about three in the afternoon, the sun having ceased to shine. The veil of the sanctuary was torn right through the middle. At last Jesus gave a loud cry. "Father", he said, "into your hands I commit my spirit." With that, he expired. When the centurion saw what had happened, he praised God.

'Truly,' he exclaimed, 'this man was innocent.' Crowds had gathered to witness this spectacle, and when they saw what had taken place, they all struck their breasts and returned home."

Luke 23: 44-49

Modern existentialism says that man can only know the real meaning and the real value of his existence from those situations which reveal his limitations--sickness, and an encounter with a person whose value is evident, and especially death. It is true from the Christian viewpoint that we cannot understand anything of his-
tory of the world and of our own history if we don't put it into the light of death, in the light of the death of Adam and his sons, into the light of the death of Christ and those who follow him. Death came into the world as a manifestation of what it means when man wishes to have his life as his own. If one wishes to become wise against the will of God and without Him, this man wishes to have some corner of his life as his own and must necessarily die, as we have "being" only from God. The death of Adam makes evident to everyone what disobedience is, what rebellion means. Rebellion means that man wishes to keep some part of his life as his own, man trying to do his own will. Since the whispering of Satan "you will be wise like God" that is, if you live your life your way and not according to the will of God; since that time, death and the fear of death has reigned over the world. Death is a sign of a fallen world.

There are very interesting discussions of Fr. Rahner and others who think it possible that Adam without sinning would have died. They feel it would not be opposed to revelation and Church dogma to judge something like that as possible. But it must be clear that death would have had quite a different meaning--it would have had the meaning of the last fulfillment, of the last turning toward God in the eternal dialogue of love. Death as it is in the history of the world is a sign of the fallen world and it would not reign over us without the sin of Adam. The manner of the death of people makes visible what was their life.

But now there are two heads of mankind. Through His death Christ has made the greatest transubstantiation of the meaning of death. His own death has the opposite meaning--He gives His life, He shows in His death that He doesn't wish to have something as His own. He doesn't wish to have His life as his own, He doesn't wish to have His will as His own, He doesn't seek His own glory. He give His life to show how He is trusting in the power and the love of the Father. His death is the highest act of the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christos. The reason for His entering into the world was simply: "I come to do your will, O God!" (Hebrews 10): "It is in this way that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once and for all." Sanctification comes from this highest act: "Behold, O My God, I come to do your will." The total sign that one wishes to do the will of God is to give his life: "Into Your hands I commend my spirit." It is in the will that one does not wish to have his own life; it is in this will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once and for all.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews 2:11 that we enter still deeper into this meditation: "In fact both he who sanctifies and they who are sanctified have a common origin." He who sanctifies is Christ by giving Himself completely to the Father and those who are sanctified are from One. "This is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers, when He says, 'I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will sing Your praises.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him'; and again, 'Here am I, and my children whom God has given me.' Therefore, because his children have blood and flesh in common, he in like manner partook of these that through death he might destroy him who had control over death, that is, the devil, and deliver those whom throughout their lives the fear of death held in bondage." Here Paul gives a history of salvation. We, as sons of Adam, were kept in slavery by the fear of a death that reveals that our whole life was not in order. It makes apparent how foolish it is to have one's life as his own. But He who sanctifies wishes to be one with us. So through His death He has destroyed the empire of death.

In the light of the priesthood Hebrews 5:6-10 explains the deep meaning of the death of Christ. "You are a priest forever after the manner of Melchisedech. Jesus, when he had a mortal body, offered prayers and supplications with piercing cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent piety. Son though he was, he learned obedience through what he suffered, and after he had been raised to the heights of perfection, he became to all who obey him the cause of eternal salvation, since God had proclaimed him a high priest after the manner of Melchisedech."

Christ is acting as high priest offering the best gift coming from earth, the best gift coming from heaven--his own life. But how can the text say that during his earthly life with tears he offered

to die? He was not to die the death of Adam. All those who are of one blood and flesh with Him, all those He calls His children and brothers, were liberated from death because of His death. We have not to die the death of Adam. He Himself could not die the death of Adam. He could suffer. He took upon Himself our suffering and sin but He did not die the death of Adam. His death was not the consequence of disobedience--He was the Faithful One! He was the highest revelation of the new way of life--to give one's whole life to God and then, knowing that, one has won his life.

Now two kinds of death are still in this world. There is still the old era and there is the new era. There is the death which reveals in the most terrible way what is rebellion and the death that is the highest expression of loving obedience and source of eternal life.

Now you see what is the great chance, the great choice of our life. We can choose between the death of Adam and the death of Christ. It is the meaning of our life to prepare for this last and definite choice which is the fulfillment of our life. We can choose but it is not from indifference. God in His infinite mercy has chosen for us--by calling us, by granting us to be baptized into the death of Christ. He Himself has made the choice, all we must do now is say "yes", to choose it in gratitude and in praise. We must put to death that old desire to keep some part of our life for our own. What will be your death? Look into your life. Watch your past years and your heart if there is still the desire to keep one small corner of your life for your own, as your own domain. Is there still the desire to have wisdom as your own wisdom?

Blessing the room of the sick the priest says: "ut mirabilia de lege tua considerent". It is the last great occasion for the sick to consider the wonderful world of the Law of God Who is Love. In the light of the grace of the unction of the sick, in the light of the Viaticum, in the light of these abundant graces, he may understand how wonderful is the love of God. It is a participation in the paschal mystery through death to eternal life. He who gives his life to God has eternal life. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood will have eternal life and I will raise him on the last day." then the priest continues "sanguine Christi inunctus"---we are anointed by the blood of the Redeemer. The Spirit gives witness to this, Christ not only put Himself under the baptism of water but he accepts for us the baptism of blood. We are anointed with the power of his blood, of his death. Joyfully you can go and encounter the angels of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints; joyfully you can go to encounter the Blessed Lord Himself.

Our death must be clear to us. It is not an abstract question. Your death and my death will make manifest what was in our heart, what was the value of our life. If our life was a loving obedience, surrendering ourselves in confidence to God, then we will be ready

when the Lord calls us, for death will make manifest what was in our hearts.

What will be my death? Ask yourselves often and everything in your life will be in the light of this decision. Will it be the final manifestation of your loving obedience or the final punishment of the rebel? Will it be joyful turning to God or eternal punishment? The moment of death puts our soul into the light of eternity. During one's lifetime one can deceive himself. One can build up slowly his own world, his own morality. One can run into activity into dissipation and can deceive himself. In the hour of our death we will see ourselves in the depths of our heart, in the light of God. Then it will be our own intellect showing us clearly what is in our heart. Then it will be our intellect speaking out, "Nearer my God to Thee," or is it possible, "Far away from God."

The man dying in disobedience, dying in this situation where he wishes to preserve his life as his own possession, condemns himself. He cannot support the light of the holiness of God but wishes to fly away from God. But still he is "unctus in sanguine Christi." Everything in his soul cries to God, His creator, the source of life, and happiness, and beatitude. It is good and wholesome for us to consider the possibility. If you remember some of the hours of your life, of your past life, how you were acting, how you were rejecting; it is good and necessary to consider the possibility that your own judgment, your conscience would cry "fly away from the terrible light of the holiness of God." It is good to consider it in order to avoid it. How terrible it would be if our Savior Who did not come to condemn the world but to save it, if the love of God would be obliged to confirm the judgment of our own conscience.

Our going to the Lord in chapel should express our living desire for eternal life. Everything in our heart should sing "Laetatus sum." With the grace of God if you are celebrating the joy of God in your life, then it will be that same joy in the hour of your death, the joy that will prevent you from rebellion.

A friend of mine had a heart attack three times and the fourth time a special surgeon said to the priest: "we are at the end of our art, trust yourself to another one, to God." He received the anointing of the sick and surrounded by his friends was waiting the moment of death. At this moment he saw a vision which he had several times before seen where it was written "in the hour of my death I will celebrate the great feast of my soul." Joy overcame him and this joy saved his life. This joy of the Lord may not save our earthly life but would it not be better to give ourselves totally to God to have this experience in the hour of our death-- the first shadow of eternal light. "How my soul rejoices when they said, now we will go to the house of the Lord. "

It is the mark of the real child of God that he is ready to do the will of God at all times and, especially that he say "yes" to God at the moment of his death which is the beginning of true life. Philippians 3:20-21 says: "As for us, our commonwealth is in heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly await our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is he who by an exercise of the power which enables him even to subject the universe to himself will refashion our lowly bodies, conforming them to his glorious body." If we are celebrating the mystery of the death and resurrection of our Lord,, we must have another outlook on death. If we have the right outlook concerning death we are winning the right outlook for our life. "Bless the people that know how to celebrate in the right way the liturgy, who listen to how the Lord himself teaches us." Listening to this teaching and receiving this great power of Christ Who can renew all things, we trust ourselves to God. We know that we are poor sinners; we know that we are weak creatures. But we know that if we trust ourselves to God and if we hope not great things from ourselves but as from God, then God will grant us a great day of death.

Let us put our death under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary. "Holy Mary Mother of God pray for us sinners, now (at this present hour for it is now we say our 'Adsum' to God giving our life to His service) and at the hour of our death." It is a great prayer of the Christian. This prayer is a certitude and gives us the right nearness to God in everyday life. Amen.

Meditation X

THE SACRAMEN OF THE EUCHARIST

"When the hour had come, he took his place on a couch, and so did the apostles. 'It has been my heart's desire,' he said to them, 'to eat this paschal supper with you before I suffer. I tell you, I shall not eat it again till it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' And after receiving a cup and saying grace, he said: 'Take this, and divide it among you. I tell you, I shall not again drink of the produce of the vine till the kingdom of God is set up.'

He also took break into his hands and, after saying grace, broke it into portions, which he gave to them with these words: "This is my body, which is about to be given for your sake. Do this as my memorial.' He did the same with the cup when supper was over, and said: 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood, which is about to be shed for your sake.'

Luke 22:14-21

It is a common conception of the people of Israel that life was in the blood. This blood bears the life of an animal, the life of man. The modern biologist may doubt this but finally this idea was destined to be the prototype of the highest truth, that it is in the blood of the Redeemer that is our life. From the opened wound of the heart of Jesus Christ came water and blood and from His blood we received our life, the Church, the Mother of the Redeemed: our life from the blood of the Redeemer. Before the Lord went to shed His blood for us he took the cup: "This is the new covenant sealed by my blood." Blood brings life but it brings life only through a covenant. This means that only they can receive eternal life from the blood of the Redeemer who accept the covenant--blood for blood. Only those have life in this alliance who are grateful for the blood of the Redeemer and are ready to express their gratitude by shedding their blood. He who shed the last drop of His own blood can and must expect that we will give our whole life for him; that we will not, like the first Adam, reserve something as our own. Those who understand the love of the Redeemer as a covenant sealed by blood will understand that in the struggle against sin, we must resist to the point of shedding out blood. (Hebrews 12:4-7).

It is one of the chief ideas of the Gospel of St. John that Christ bore witness in His blood. I John 5: "This is he who came in water and in blood, Jesus Christ; not merely by the water of baptism but both by the water and by his blood. The Spirit also contin-

ally bears reliable witness, because the Spirit is truth. And so, we have three reliable witnesses of victory: the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three are in agreement."

He did not come only with water. It was not just the baptism in the Jordan. It is not just a ceremony even if this ceremony would be most meaningful; all the ceremonies lead to the deepest reality where they are fulfilled on the cross by the blood of the Redeemer. This is He Who came with water and blood and not by water alone, and there is the Spirit to bear witness. The Spirit bears witness at the baptism in the Jordan where he visibly comes upon Christ, upon Christ Who from the first moment of His life, from the Incarnation, is the Anointed One, He who has the plenitude of the Spirit. But He bears witness already of the great hour, the hour our Lord himself calls, from the wedding of Cana to the end, "His hour", when He gives the last fullness of His witness by the anointing of the Spirit. There are three witnesses: Spirit, water and blood, and these are in agreement.

Now when the Lord gave us the Eucharist He declared that it was a covenant. We celebrate it in remembrance of Him, that He sealed the covenant not just by water, but by blood. We know that, just as Baptism in the water has its whole power from the baptism of the blood, we can only celebrate this covenant if we are living as spiritual men, as the Spirit bears witness. Only through the Spirit, through a life according to the Law of the Spirit, can we understand the Covenant and can we take the cup of that New Covenant and declare everyday: "Blood for blood". One who celebrates Mass renews his adherence to the covenant sealed by blood. It is not only an external ceremony; it must be a witness of blood. One must know what it means to celebrate the New Covenant sealed by the blood of the Redeemer. By celebrating the Eucharist we are renewing our baptismal vows and the presence of the cup of the New Covenant of the Redeemer's blood makes us realize how great is this covenant and how sincere must be our gratitude.

At the wonderful time of the Vatican Council II we must be clear of the two dangerous tendencies which today are clearly distinguished by the Council, but must be overcome by all priests and Christians. These dangers are within us--the danger of the moralists and that of the liturgists. Moralism in a bad sense is to build a system of obligation referring principally to the Decalogue--the Law of the Old Testament, forgetting that the heart even of the Old Testament is love God with your whole heart, loving neighbor as yourself. They build up a tremendous building of laws and then declare that there is a new circle of law--the ceremonial law of the New Testament. St. Augustine even says that certain clerics have a tendency to multiply the law of rubrics so that no one can discover that we are living under the law of liberty. St. Thomas dares to quote him, saying that in his (Thomas') time it is still more necessary to admonish the prelates. I think that at that time, too, some bishops said: "We don't need theologians to

tell us how to run our dioceses!" But St. Thomas dared to quote a theologian, who was a bishop himself, and had a right to speak on these matters.

Moralism sees the whole life and especially liturgy as a group of laws. This moralism can be a way of escape from the real commitment of the New Testament. It is moralism with the best intention of fulfilling law.

And there is on the other hand the danger of liturgism. Some liturgists emphasize the wrong thing. Some were rubricists--I don't speak of them, they are passe--considering only these things as mechanical, never asking what they mean. When I was a student I was taught, and saw by the example of priests, how to extend the hands in praying "Dominus vobiscum"--like this! This was exact. Any farther was a mortal sin. Now this is abolished by the code. One is not a rubricist if one embraces his people by extending his arms to represent Christ, Who extends His arms on the cross, Who shows his love by embracing His people. The man who has his heart in the law of the spirit extends his arms humbly to show he receives everything from God. It must make sense!

This was the first step in the renewal of liturgy. Liturgy is an expression of signs. It was a necessary step to make us aware that there were existing many laws which became laws by misunderstanding. For example, the law fabricated by the moralists of "voce submissa", that one could hear it, not even the altar boy. This was just an error of one moralist. "Voce alta" and "voce submissa" were rules for music; one is in a high, one is in a lower voice. This is a law that makes no sense--"voce submissa" with no "voce".

We can be sure that after the work of the post-conciliar commission everyone will be able to understand the laws as expressing realities. "Voce submissa" will be used to express important points, slowly, solemnly. "Voce alta" are sung hymns. But there was a tendency to be satisfied that these reforms made sense and sometimes everyone started to give to the rubrics his own sense. But besides this arbitrary tendency, there was a normal temptation to pay complete attention to this--that every rubric should express some meaning. It was a tendency of aestheticism--of beauty, to enjoy a high culture. Could a vernacular song ever reach the high level of culture as a Latin hymn? No! So we must keep the Latin! This is a wrong tendency.

There were strong tensions in our seminaries between the young and the old professors. One bishop, president of the Liturgical Commission, was a fanatic against renewal (he later admitted this after he was 'converted'). But some opposition came also from the tendency of the young to make the liturgy beautiful. An old dean told me his curate celebrated Mass as beautifully as the

cardinal, but lived as a hedonist, smoked and slept late. Then the curate complained that his pastor searched everywhere, even the next country, to find the right rubrics, but had no idea of pastoral tasks. And so there was this opposition.

One of Pius XII's advisors, a very open-minded man, wrote of German soldiers who knew the Mass well and organized beautiful liturgy, but who were at the same time adorers of the pagan ethics of the Nazis--a very strong statement. I personally cannot approve it, but others had different experiences. He was a Jesuit, and so was "unworthy" to wear Hitler's uniform. I hoped that as a Redemptorist I would be unworthy, too, because the Reichstag had declared us to be a kind of Jesuit, but Hitler didn't see it that way. I found soldiers to help me in the liturgy. One soldier took care of the hymns--very beautiful. In 1941, December, in Kartov, my pioneers made me a beautiful altar, and painted a picture of St. George. Besides the soldiers, the Russian people also came. The law forbade me to celebrate Mass, but I did it. I always liked to do what was forbidden. Because my father forbade me to smoke, I did. Then, when he allowed it, I no longer desired it. Then later on I became more reasonable, and now I like to transgress only unreasonable laws!

Some years ago, travelling, I met a man who remembered my Christ, 1941, Mass in Kasrtov. The liturgy was a great event in our sad days.

So I did not have the sad experiences that this other priest did about Nazi ethics. My men helped me protect the Russians from injustice. And when some officers were present at my Mass, I had to obey one law and pray for the Fuhrer and the army. Later the whole group came up and told me to stop, or they would not return to Mass. My company dared to hide Jewish women from the S.S. at risk of their lives. Nobody in the company was suspected as a possible traitor. All, Catholics and Protestants, helped in this, and came to the Masses. One man, Hans, served Mass often. Then, returning from the front after 2 or 3 months, he no longer served but sat passively in back. I asked why. He said he was ashamed of the life he had led those past months. They knew to a great extent!

But what Pius' advisor said is true of many, because they considered laws as ends in themselves--moral and ceremonial laws. There are still many who have not realized that the celebration of the mysteries must be the law of our lives. St. Leo the Great has a wonderful expression: "Our Redeemer made visible the love of the Father and He continually makes it visible in the liturgy." The whole thinking of Leo the Great as of all the early Fathers was that man had to make visible in his life what he is perceiving in the liturgy. The liturgy of Easter Week expresses it often. We keep through our life what we have celebrated! Perhaps the best is the Postcommunion of August 29th. Here is the first stage

of the liturgical renewal, that we have a veneration for the sacraments and that we perceive the message of the liturgy, but the last step is that our joy will be full if our life expresses what we have celebrated.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #2: "The Eucharist is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."

The words of the Lord: "This cup is the New Covenant sealed by my blood." Celebrating the liturgy and especially the great sign, the Eucharist, we must know that this covenant is sealed by blood. Receiving the cup of the Lord we know what it demands--our whole life. "A change," says Hebrews 7:12, "of priesthood is a change of law." We are celebrating the priesthood of Christ and this must be the new law of His priesthood. This great reality is already indicated in Psalm 115, repeated everyday before the priest takes the cup of the Redeemer: "How shall I make a return to the Lord for all the good He has done for me. The cup of salvation I shall take and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord before all his people. Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints. (Blood for blood)." O Lord, I am your servant, the son of your handmaid; you have loosed my bonds. I will sacrifice to you the sacrifice of praise, and I will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord before all his people. In the courts of the house of the Lord, In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!

Meditation XI

LITURGY AS "MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM"

"Your resistance in the struggle against sin has not yet gone as far as bloodshed...

Strive for peace with all men, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Watch carefully that no one lose aught of God's grace, that no bitter root spring up, cause trouble, and defile the majority of you. Watch that no impure or irreligious person like Esau arise who for a single meal sold his birthright. You know well that afterward when he sought to have the blessing allotted to him, he was rejected and had no chance for a change of heart, although he had sought the blessing with tears...

Be on guard that you do not resist him that speaks, because if they did not escape who resisted him that spoke oracles on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him that speaks oracles to us from heaven...

Therefore let us hold fast to grace because we are on the point of receiving an unshakable kingdom. Be means of that grace we offer to God acceptable worship, blended with piety and reverence. Our God, you know, is a consuming fire."

Hebrews: 12

The twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews indicates to us that our vocation to sanctity is a struggle, which in its earnestness must correspond to the blood of the New Testament. It is a vocation to holiness and it demands the holy fear of God, a deep reverence for a God Who is a consuming fire. It is a much more urgent fear of God than that of the Old Testament. Celebrating the liturgy, especially the Holy Eucharist, we approach the Judge and Jesus, the Mediator of the new and eternal covenant. We are celebrating the heavenly liturgy, it is true, but we poor sinners must feel that it is a "mysterium tremendum", a mystery of sanctity. Our next meditation will treat the Eucharist as the mystery of beatitude and the mystery of faith, the mystery of unity and charity. We will consider first, however, the mystery of holy fear, the mystery of the holiness of God. This is the foundation that is necessary if we wish to understand the bliss and beatitude of this mystery, the uniting power of this mystery.

Men of today do not like to speak and to think of these aspects. Many of our Catholics are praying only "Father", "Abba", and omitting totally "Who art in heaven". They are speaking very much of love and are giving satisfaction to their sentimentality and desires, superficial and unpurified goodness. They do not understand the real nature of love because they do not wish to meditate on the sanctity and holiness of God. We cannot limit this aspect in the liturgy for we can see it clearly in the Eucharist.

Our previous meditation considered the very words of the Lord: "This is the new covenant sealed by My blood." A covenant coming from God is a manifestation of His humble love: that God Who is in heaven comes so near to a miserable people, as it was for the twelve tribes of Israel. On Mt. Sinai God manifested His goodness and kindness, but He also manifested His holiness. Hebrews speaks of this manifestation when even Moses trembles before God. Exodus 33 especially speaks of this manifestation of the love and holiness of God. Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend, and He promised Moses that He would accompany His people even after the rebellion of the people. He wished to show His kindness and goodness, so He promised to walk with His people. Then Moses dared to ask a great thing: then Moses asked: "Show me Your face"! Yahweh answered: "All my splendor will pass before your eyes and I will pronounce My name, Yahweh. But My face you cannot see. Mortal man cannot see Me and live to tell it." Then God said to Moses to hide in a cave so that he may be protected from the terrifying splendor of His glory when He passed over. After having passed over, God would allow him to see Him from afar and from behind. Even this vision of God was so great from behind that Aaron and the people didn't dare to consider the radiant splendor on the face of Moses when he returned from the mountain.

St. Paul in II Corinthians 3 says: "If the dispensation that brought death, existing in writing and engraved on stones, was inaugurated in such splendor that the children of Israel could not fix their gaze on Moses' face because of the splendor of that face--a splendor that was but passing--shall not the dispensation of the Spirit be still more resplendent?" We read this text without being impressed, but it is to be seen with this background that Moses dared to ask God: "Show me the sight of Your face, of Your glory."

In the New Covenant God's love is still greater. It is the highest manifestation of His love, but still a greater manifestation of the awful glory of God. God is a consuming fire. He consumed the holocaust; the human body of Christ is offered for us for the remission of sins. It is the fire of God's holiness that prepares this holocaust, the sacrifice of His Son. It is God's love that seeks reparation and satisfaction, but prepares the sacrifice by His own love through His Son.

The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that God has shaken Mount Sinai and then He says: "I do not only shake the earth, but even the heavens." Shaken also is the heart of the Son Who bears within Himself heaven: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me." We must hear this cry! Then we have some idea of the holiness of God; how God hates sin, and how God in His holiness must demand from us a total devotion and total giving of ourselves.

This experience is the very manifestation of the New Testament on Mt. Thabor and on Mount Calvary is to be celebrated in the Eucharist. It is the New Covenant sealed by the blood of the Redeemer. The liturgy itself teaches us in a very lively realization what is the mystery of sanctity: the holiness of God is a consuming fire. Normally, the chalice is on the altar before the priest approaches or, in the renewed liturgy, the chalice will only be borne to the altar after the offertory. Our actual rubrics do not express well the dimension of the liturgy because we run so quickly to the altar, put our chalice there, and then only are we aware that we should not run to the altar before we have expressed our unworthiness. Only then does the priest realize what he says, "Introibo ad altare Dei." The altar means Calvary and it means the fire of the altar in heaven. The priest confesses in the presence of God Almighty and all the saints and to his brothers his unworthiness. He doesn't confess that he is a criminal, that he has transgressed the law of the state. He compares his life to the Holy God with His holy love, and therefore this deep fear of God urges him to say: "mea culpa". "Judica me Deus." He knows that God must judge all things and he demands humbly that he may be judged by the saving judgment of the Cross. Then the priest enters: "...ad Sancta sanctorum, aufer a nobis, quaesumus, Domine, iniquitates nostras, ut indulgeris omnia peccata mea." "Iniquitas" is a strong expression of sin; it is sin as offending the Holy God Who is a consuming fire of holiness.

Again, during the "Gloria" the priest and the entire community together, just as with the Confiteor, express their adoration of this great God with the words: "Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth, pleni sunt caeli et terra..." Very expressive of the mystery of holiness is the "munda cor meum" because here the priest is reminded of Isaias, chapter 6: "Munda cor meum ac labia mea, omnipotens Deus, qui labia Isaiae prophetae calculo mundasti ignito." As God said to Moses, "mortal man cannot see me and live to tell it," so Isaias made this his experience when he saw God on his throne and heard: "Holy, holy, holy" and when he cried out: "Woe is me, because I have held my peace; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isaias 6:5). St. John of the Cross says that if a man not purified from all venial sins would be granted to have immediately, without preparation of purification, a vision of the Mystical Union--that is, only to see God from afar and behind--, he would be killed immediately. This is the experience of Moses, Isaias, and so many others. The first mystical crises in the darkness of the

spirit are first touches of the holiness of God, and they are like fires purifying man. They are painful and are lasting until man finally gives himself totally to God and is cleaned of all egoism. "Munda cor meum". We do not have the right to claim the mystery of the Covenant (and liturgy is this mystery) if God does not purify us with the fire coming from the altar of His holiness. Here you can see how important is the sacrament of penance for the priest. A priest who has the feeling that he does not need confession, in spite of the fact that the Church recommends it so much to him, will not know what it means to say "munda cor meum ac labia mea calculo ignito", that is, with the fire coming from the heavenly altar of God. A man who runs so quickly to the altar without feeling the need of purification is a man who is lost. "Mortal man cannot see Me and live to tell it." We should feel like Isaias as we go to the altar and should often go to the sacrament of penance, because "my lips are polluted with sin."

Once more the liturgy reminds us of this same experience of the holiness of God by Isaias by singing after the preface: "Holy, holy, holy". We are reminded of the deep reverence and holy fear of the angels in heaven. Notice also the prayers of preparation to the consecration, the last prayer: "Hanc igitur oblationem servitutis nostrae....atque ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi." We know that for those who are self-satisfied, who seek their own glory, who do not accept the purifying fire from the altar of God, the mystery of holiness will be revealed in eternal damnation. And the very words of consecration remind us that the sacrifice of Christ is for the remission of sins "qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum." It is the cup of the Redeemer for the forgiveness of sins.

The "memento mortuorum" tells us that no one can see God if he is not totally freed from his egoism. Then in a loud voice the priest cries: "Nobis quoque peccatoribus." We know we can be saved only through the mercy of God. The demand of the "Our Father", forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" is especially underlined in the liturgy as Our Lord did on the Mountain. "Libera nos, quaesumus, Domine, ab omnibus malis, praeteritis, praesentibus et futuris." Once more "Agnus Dei, Who takes away the sins of the world" reminds us of this mystery. The Lamb, prepared at the Last Supper, is offered for our sins.

Nobody, therefore, can deny that the liturgy itself, if it is meditated and understood and celebrated with deep understanding, is a continuous teaching of the holy fear of God; that God is a consuming fire, that God hates sin and does everything to deliver us from sinfulness. We should not only celebrate the mystery of holiness, the holy fear of God, but it must be one of the fundamental motives of our life. Our life must be for the glory of the holy God. An important fundamental motive in our life must be to fight against sin until the shedding of blood because of this holiness of God.

Satisfaction and reparation must be felt. Men of today have often lost the sense of sin because they do not have an understanding of the holiness of God. We are so superficial sometimes because we do not feel the need of reparation and penance for our sins. But especially we cannot offer the minimalism of a lazy moralism to the holy God Who has revealed His holiness in the revelation of His love in the covenant of His blood.

Malachias speaks of this laziness, of this superficial service of God. (Malachias 1: 7ss.) "To you, O priests, that despise my name and have said: Wherein have we despised thy name? You offer polluted bread upon my altar and you say: Wherein have we polluted thee? In that you say: the table of the Lord is contemptible. If you offer the blind for sacrifice is it not evil? And if you offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Offer it to thy prince, if he will be pleased with it or if he will regard thy face, saith the Lord of hosts. And now beseech ye the face of God, that he may have mercy on you (for by your hand hath this been done): if by any means he will receive your faces, saith the Lord of hosts. Who is there among you that will shut the doors and will kindle the fire on my altar gratis? I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles: and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean oblation. For my name is great among the Gentiles, said the Lord of hosts. And you have profaned it in that you say: the table of the Lord is defiled; and that which is laid thereupon is contemptible, with the fire that devoureth it. And you have said: Beholder of our labor: and you puffed it away, saith the Lord of hosts. And you brought in of rapine the lame and the sick, and brought in an offering. Shall I accept it at your hands, saith the Lord? Cursed is the deceitful man that hath in his flock a male and making a vow offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord: for I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the Gentiles. Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the testament whom you desire shall come to his temple. Behold he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. And who shall be able to think of the day of his coming? And who shall stand to see him? For he is like a refining fire and like the fuller's herb. And he shall sit refining and cleansing the silver."

Let us consider the Law of Christ, the rule of Christian morality, in the light of this passage. "You hold the Lord's table of little moment?" If you have eaten from the table of the Lord and if everyday you are entering into the covenant sealed with blood, do we bring to God only a blind victim or lame or diseased? We do so if we do not purify our motives; if we bring only those things that are pleasing to us and if we take care to do only that which is obliged. Have we not also the obligation to follow those counsels found in the Sermon on the Mount? "We are obliged only to bring a victim that is blind"-- that is our moralism -- that is

the mentality of our legalism! Everyone feels this temptation of our legalism--to make clearer the limitations on what we are obliged to do. We must be careful not to impose on others something that should not be imposed. There are two different areas: what man can impose under threatening, threatening even non-absolution; and what God can demand, "secundum mensuram donationis Christi." St. Thomas was not clear in his early years whether the great commandment of the New Covenant "Love one another as I have loved you," is obliging in law. But the mature Thomas said: "Everyone must fulfill it to his best in accordance with the gifts of God." If one reasons that this law of love is not obliging for him-- "I can do it sometimes if I wish to have more merit"--he is as the picture in this prophecy of the sacrifice that is lame or diseased. It is true that this moralism made life a hard burden, because it was naked, because it was separated from the thirst for the real fountain of life. There were so many small things. It was easy for some, harder for others. Always if man begins to give his chief attention to the question: "What must I do under mortal sin", he finds it dreary work and then dismisses it. But if one loves the law of grace and sees the wonderful love of God and His holiness coming to us and revealing to us Himself in the covenant sealed by blood; then; he will not say dreary but 'jugum meum suavis.' If we acknowledge this law as a law of life and growth, if we see everything in the light of the gifts of God and what He demands by His loving will; then we will not fall into this attitude. It was expressed in Germany and in other countries: "To live as a Catholic is hard, but to die as a Catholic is good, for you will then be paid for your weary work." This is a defamation! Our Christian life is a joy and not hard; it does not mean a lazy beast ailing you present to Me." Read some treatises on the operas superirogatoria, and read once more some treatises de superfluis. If rich people have something that is superfluous and if you see how much a rich man gives, then you can find out the classic meaning of a beast that is ailing. It is even present today in a great number of countries. What will the rich nations offer?

I say to young Americans, I know that American Catholicism has poured out a great generosity after World War II. But I dare to say that we could all be more generous. We should not be satisfied with that great generosity. We should look to generous Christians and take them as examples. With this attitude on the world-wide level, this is the condition of preserving peace--not the atom bomb. But permanent peace is not possible if we do not have a proper concept of Christian life, if the whole Christian life does not correspond to that Victim that the Father has prepared for us in His holiness.

This prophecy of the sacrifice that will be celebrated from the morning to the evening is "all at once the Lord will visit his temple, the Lord so longed-for". Welcome the herald of a divine covenant. But then He will put men to the test, and the real test for our Christian conscience is the covenant sealed by the blood of our Redeemer. The real test must be the holiness that was manifested on Calvary, must be the pastoral liturgy-- how the Church teaches us in the celebration of the liturgy the mystery of the Holy God who is a consuming fire! Amen.

Meditation XII

LITURGY AS PASCHAL MYSTERY

"Let my soul be glorified in the Lord: let the lowly
hear and rejoice.
Magnify the Lord with me; together let us extol his
name.
I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and he delivered
me from all my fears.
Look toward him, that you may be filled with joy,
and that your faces be not covered with shame.
Behold, the unhappy man cried, and the Lord heard,
and rescued him from all his straits.
Taste and see how good is the Lord; blessed is the
man who flees to him for refuge.
Fear the Lord, O you his saints, for they that fear
him know no want.
The powerful have become poor and have hungered;
but they that seek the Lord shall lack no
good thing."

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy makes clear that the whole Liturgy, but in a special way the Eucharist, is the Easter mystery. It is the blissful mystery of the love of God, and at the same time the mystery of faith and the mystery of unity.

The Eucharist is the joy of the paschal mystery. It is the chant of the redeemed. For those who were in distress and for those who had need of the powerful help of God, it is the blissful experience of the covenant of love sealed by blood. It is the ever new experience: God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son that everyone who has faith in Him, though He die, will have eternal life. It is true and we must not forget that it is the **sacrifice** of reparation. It is the great mystery of holiness, the great act of humility and of obedience of the Lord in order to repair the disobedience of the pride of men. "He died for us and was obedient even unto death. Therefore God raised Him to the heights and bestowed upon Him a name above all names and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord and glory of the Father."

The renewed liturgy will be a wonderful source of joy and the joy will be the source of a beautiful Christian life. Already if we meditate on the liturgy and listen to it, it is evident that the liturgy is blissful mystery of the love of God. "Introibo ad altare Dei, ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam." Even a man of 80 years can say this because indeed it was the old men who renewed the liturgy of the Church. There were

many younger men at the Council who were really old-fashioned. We can take the example of Pope John to illustrate this point. He was remarkable in his humor because it expressed a deep joy in the Lord. With joy a man can remain forever young. John found his joy in the sacraments with his at least two visits daily to the Blessed Sacrament.

The "Gloria": We express our joy together with all the angels. The whole liturgy is the joyful expectance of the Lord: "Et iterum venturus est cum gloria." If one had heard the Masses composed by Bach and Mozart, he will recall that at this point there is great power expressed. They build up to this very powerful point in expectance of the coming of Christ. The whole Mass, even without a Credo, is an expression of this hope, "Come Lord Jesus". It is the joy of the redeemed one. The renewed liturgy tells us that it is not a normal Mass unless there is some chant. It reveals the poverty of the community if there are no hymns. The Mass is an expression of joy.

Everything awakens joy in us, even when the passion is expressed. The liturgy after the consecration says: "nec non et ab inferis Resurrectionis, sed et in caelos gloriosae Ascensionis." And the chalice sealed by the blood is for us in view of the redemption "calix inebrians", a source of joy since we know that we have the life of Christ in His blood which is eternal life.

"I will take the cup of the chalice and will invoke the name of God upon my lips." The growth of the spiritual life becomes visible in the growing harmony between holy fear and holy joy. There is the intimacy with our Best Friend and the intimate crying in the Holy Spirit "Abba", and also the "Who art in heaven." It is wrong to express one experience and not to retain the other. Those wishing to have the deep experience of the Easter joy must unite themselves with the suffering Lord, and then they will be united with the Glorious Lord.

It depends also on one's character and temperament. One has a more immediate access to the Passion of the Lord and another is more joyful; but both must strive for a proper balance between the mystery of the holy fear of God and the mystery of His blissful love.

The Eucharist is the mystery of faith. Chapter 6 of the Gospel of St. John presents in wonderful unity the faith that gives us eternal life. Christ gives us eternal life, but His own flesh and blood, which are His life, is eternal life, is the resurrection. Faith and the Eucharist are not separated. The faith of the Church is celebrated in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the joyful proclamation of the love of Christ and the joyful answer of faith. One of the reasons why the vernacular should have a greater role in the liturgy is because the liturgy is the nourishment of our faith. Celebration of the Eucharist by its very

structure must strengthen our faith. It would not be sufficient to say that faith is a necessary condition for celebration, as we often learn in the manuals. Of course, only the faithful celebrate the mystery of faith in the proper way. The great door to the community of faith is baptism and only those who believe in the Lord and are baptized can in a full measure be sharers of the Eucharistic meal. But at the same time the Eucharist is continually strengthening and deepening our faith. It is the expression of the faith of the whole Church. Especially a community as a community together with a priest must be an expression of a joyful faith. Guardini fifteen years ago had said that all the great conversions of people have their source in the celebration of the mystery of faith. Religious sociology proves that the mechanism of dechristianization has its source in a mechanical and dead liturgy. Nothing is more suited to kill faith than dead liturgy. Our preaching and catechesis has no value if the faithful feel that in our celebration of the Mass we do not really mean what we are doing. If we are rushed during the Mass and have not any time for a prayerful Mass, then they will not believe that we have faith. And if the parking problem in the United States obliges us to celebrate Mass in 20 minutes and give not more than 10 minutes for the proclamation of the Good Tidings, then Mass becomes a law, an occasion for mortal sins, and is no longer a source of deep faith. First we must make an effort to see through meditation and prayer that the Eucharist is the most joyful expression of our faith. Concerning the parking problem in the United States, there is no reason why Mass could not be said throughout the day and thus celebrate the Eucharist with a deep reverence of faith.

During the question conferences you have asked me what is the center of seminary life. It is the liturgy and especially the Eucharist. Our whole life, our ideals, our quarrels, and so on, must be thought of in light of the mystery of faith -- the liturgy. It is the center of our faith and we must put everything in the light of this center. Our whole life must be this expression of the acceptance of the mystery of faith. St. Paul in Romans 10:10 says: "Because with the heart a man believes and attains holiness, and with the lips profession of faith is made and salvation secured." If faith is deep in the heart, then our life will joyfully be a proclamation of the faith, and the center of this proclamation is the Eucharist. Our life must agree with the paschal mystery we are celebrating daily and each Sunday with our people.

The first Protestant minister converted to Catholicism in this century writes in his biography that the first step towards his conversion was his assistance at the Mass celebrated by a pious priest. So much depends on how we celebrate liturgy. The entire Church and pastoral renewal must begin at this center of our faith. There is no hope in our preaching if there is no reform in the celebration of the liturgy. And we can only celebrate a true Mass if the center of all our liturgy becomes the rule and norm of our life.

Finally, the Eucharist is the mystery of unity. The oldest Eucharistic text (I. Cor. 10:17) expresses strongly the mystery of unity, "Because the bread is one, we, the many who all partake of that one bread, form one body." The great medieval theologians said, "res et sacramentum Eucharisti est unitas populi fidelium". What the Eucharist expresses above all (and this is the highest grace) is the unity of the People of God. St. John, the great preacher of unity, makes very clear that the Eucharist is the source and sign of unity. In the Cenacle our Lord promulgated the New Law: "Love one another as I have loved you." This is only possible because He lives in us. He assures everyone of us that He is our life and that we are one if we receive the Body of the glorified Lord. We can love one another with the love of Christ because He lives within us.

In the Cenacle, after the institution of the priesthood and the Eucharist, while preparing Himself for the great hour of His death, He prayed His great priestly prayer for unity. It was His testimony. It is important to see how our Lord Himself through the proclamation of the New Law and through His own priestly prayer expresses this meaning of the Eucharist.

"I am offering a prayer for them; not for the world do I pray, but for those whom you have entrusted to me; for yours they are. All that is mine is yours, and yours is mine; and they are my crowning glory... Holy Father! Keep them loyal to your name which you have given me. May they be one as we are one!" (This is a great prayer for the college of Apostles. He continues His prayer for the whole community:) "However, I do not pray for them alone; I also pray for those who through their preaching will believe in me. All are to be one; just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, so they, too, are to be one in us. The world must come to believe that I am your ambassador." (Here we see the synthesis of the mystery of faith and unity: faith in the mystery of unity and the witness of faith is the witness of unity). "The glory you have bestowed on me I have bestowed on them, that they may be one as we are one, --I in them and you in me. Thus their oneness will be perfected. The world must come to acknowledge that I am your ambassador, and that you love them as you love me."

What greater things could be said? Christ Himself makes the Eucharist the center of faith. The oriental liturgies bring it out very clearly. Years ago I was sent to Russia and on Christmas day I came to a large city alone. I had to search for a Church in

order to celebrate Mass. I finally found a Church and the Bishop was in the process of celebrating Mass. I joined them in a Mass of three hours. It was such a tremendous experience of unity: how the bishop, college of priests and deacons, with the people listening, all took part. Only when all was over did I ask whether they were Catholics, and found out they were Orthodox. But I did it in good conscience. Indeed in their deepest attitude they are Catholics. We have much to learn from them. That Russia could have produced so many millions of martyrs, that they could keep their faith in face of persecution, is due to a living liturgy. They knew their baptism through their liturgy, and Mass made it ever clearer. Mass for them was "the event" of the People of God.

In these times when the Holy Spirit has awakened this great desire for unity, I think that we have to open our eyes and ears and hearts and understand the teaching of the liturgy and try to express it better in our celebration of the liturgy. This teaching is the great commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you."
Amen.

Meditation XIII

THE EUCHARIST AND VIRGINITY

"As regards virgins, I have no precept of the Lord, yet, as a man who, by the mercy received from the Lord, is worthy of trust, I think that it is excellent, in view of the present distress, yes, that it is excellent for a person to remain in this state of virginity. Are you bound by marriage to a wife? Do not seek to be free from her. Are you free of marriage ties? Do not seek them. Yet, if you marry, you commit no sin, and if a virgin marries, she commits no sin. But the married will have their human trials, and I would like to spare you that...

I would have you free from concern. He who is unmarried is concerned about the interests of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he who is married is concerned about worldly interests, how he may please his wife. Thus his interests are divided. The unmarried woman or the virgin is concerned with the Lord's interests, is intent on being holy both in body and in mind. But the married woman is concerned with worldly things, how she may please her husband. I say this for your benefit, not to hold you in check, but that you may conduct yourselves properly and attend assiduously to the Lord without distractions."

I Corinthians 7:25-28; 32-35

The Holy Eucharist is the very center of the People of God, of the priesthood of the Church, and of the cult of adoration of God. The Eucharist is also the source of that power which makes us sharers of the redemption of the world. All things receive within the Church their full light. They are fully illuminated if seen in the light of the mystery of faith--the Holy Eucharist. This is true in a special way of the great mystery of Christian virginity, that is, celibacy for the kingdom of God.

When speaking on virginity we should have present first our Lord, Who in virginal love has only one spouse, the Church. Our Lord gives His love not exclusively to one person but to the whole Church to all mankind. We should keep in mind also the Blessed Virgin Mary who is the prototype of the Church in her virginal response to the love of the Lord. We should have in mind as well all those who in virginal love have followed the Lord with undivided love. But we should have in mind also those who still have to struggle and to

fight but who are sincerely striving toward the full realization of what virginity is. We do not even exclude those who have grievously sinned against chastity but by penance and undivided love to the Lord have become as Clement of Alexandria said: "anew as to what is virginity." We must also try to see virginity in the full light of the Eucharist, the mystery of faith. The Eucharist as sacrifice, as the divine meal, as the meal of the family of God, and as the Everlasting presence of the Lord of the New Covenant, is the source and school of virginal purity. The liturgy makes the courageous virgin Agnes say: "If I touch Him I remain pure, if I receive Him I remain a virgin."

Only those who grasp better and better the meaning of the presence of the Lord, that is, what is His way of celebrating the new and eternal covenant, can fully grasp the meaning of celibacy for the kingdom of God. Only they can live in virginal purity. Every form of chastity, but especially virginal chastity, has two essential conditions or foundations: (1) a deep religious respect for oneself, a deep respect for the body; and (2) detachment.

A sin against purity is not possible for a man who knows the meaning of his body: that there is a splendor of the glory of God about his body and that his body shall receive full participation in the glory of the body of the Risen Lord. All aims against chastity come from a lack of respect for oneself and one's body. Where can we better learn to have this deep religious respect for our body than in the Holy Eucharist where we are united with the body of the Risen Lord and where we are adoring God not only in the depth of our soul but also with our whole body. There we learn respect; there we learn detachment!

Besides this lack of respect, there is egoism (a foolish infantilism of egotism) which is the source of the lack of chastity. If one opens his person and becomes a real personality, opening himself to another; if one learns to give oneself to the service of God and neighbor; then he frees himself from infantilism and impurity. Where can we better learn this detachment than in the Eucharist where we celebrate the New Covenant sealed by the blood of the Redeemer Who gave Himself for us, poor sinners, His brothers. The Eucharist teaches us this virtue but it is not only an external teaching but a schooling and instruction in our hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

There is a second aspect in the relation between the Eucharist and virginity. Both have as their deepest meaning an exclusive love, an undivided love. Upon the Cenacle are written the words of the Last Supper: "As the Lord loved those who were His disciples, He loved them to the end." Christ accomplished the greatest thing possible: He gave us the greatest proof and sign of His love by His death. In celebrating the Eucharist we celebrate and proclaim it constantly to His Spouse, the Church, that it is a covenant of

undivided love for the whole Church and every person who belongs wholeheartedly to the Church. The response of the Church is twofold. The whole life of the Church is a response but there are two very visible centers: (1) the cult of the Eucharist, and (2) the state of virginity.

The Church gives her deepest attention and love in celebrating the Eucharist. Do we not feel this from the new constitution on the liturgy? Both Pope John and Pope Paul repeated that it was by special divine providence that the renewal of the II Vatican Council began with the renewal of the liturgy. The Church is visibly the loving spouse of Christ as she celebrates with the greatest love and attention the whole liturgy, but especially the Eucharist. She teaches us that all external attention, preparation, and celebration has value only if it is expressive of our heart. If one truly understands liturgy, he will thus offer each day not only the gifts of this earth but his own self together with the Lord.

Secondly, there is the state of virginity by which the Church gives visible witness to all that she is the spouse of the Lord. The Lord is the virginal Lord of the Church. He lives totally for the Church in toto with undivided love unto the shedding of His blood. The Church proclaims this in a very special and very necessary way through the state of virginity that her life is first of all to be conceived as undivided love for the Lord. It is not as if only virgins within the Church would love the Lord but without this state of virginity and without the visible witness of those who have embraced this state, married people would not understand that the value of their marriage depends on their love of the Lord.

What is virginity? What is celibacy for the kingdom of God? It is not first to be seen as a renouncement. It is not first to be seen as a service. There is renouncement and service, but the foundation and the very heart of virginity is undivided love. St. Paul declares: it is that particular love of the Lord for a human creature to whom He makes known that He wishes him to follow Him in undivided love and to be a witness of the vocation of His Church--undivided love for the Lord. It is not man's own decision but it is first of all the choice of the Lord, his predelection. "It is not you who have chosen Me but I have chosen you." This declaration of Christ can, in a very particular way, be applied to the vocation of virginity. No one can dare make such a great choice; no one could understand and realize the state if it were not the Lord Himself Who makes the virgin know and feel how great it is to give oneself totally for the Lord and totally for the whole Church for the service of immortal souls.

Virginal love has its source in the nearness of Christ. Virginity in its fullest sense, in the Christian meaning, began with the "Emmanuel"--"God with us". The Blessed Virgin, who in the highest and fullest manner had this experience of the "Emmanuel" of "God with us", leads the great host of virgins for the Lord because of a special nearness of the Lord. We experience this near-

ness of the Lord in the celebration of the liturgy and in the intimate union with the glorified body of the Lord in our visits to the Blessed Sacrament. It is not a good sign if a priest doesn't find time to visit the Blessed Sacrament or if in the morning he runs to the sacristy and to the altar and as quickly as possible runs away and forgets the everlasting covenant of which the Blessed Sacrament is the sign of the everlasting presence of the Lord of that covenant. Someone who has a normal sexuality (and that means a normal desire to be loved in his whole person) and who doesn't like the nearness of the Lord, will burn in the desire to find it in a human person. But one who is filled by the experience of the nearness of the Lord and likes to be present before the Lord, will find his desire to be loved fulfilled by the Lord. If we do not feel that Christ is the sun of our life, the fullness of love, and if we do not feel that our visits to Him in the Eucharist are the great experience that we are loved in the highest predilection; then we will never fully realize what virginity is--celibacy for the kingdom of God. And this kingdom is in the Lord Himself.

Virginity is not a substitute produced to fill the void left by an enforced renunciation of married love. Virginity in the priesthood is a great witness to those who suffer due to an enforced renunciation of married love either because they do not wish to pay the particular price of modern exploitation of the sexuality of the body, or because something in their life is lacking, or because their parents are too possessive, or because of their great love for parents who are in need. It is God's will that they too will find that this is not a loss but an opportunity to better understand what it means to be totally given to the Lord. It was a wonderful experience for me when in Russia an Orthodox priest visited me and I asked him how was his wife and children. He said to me: "My wife died several years ago, the war has killed my children, and now I am alone with the Lord." He said this with such great serenity and peace that I know immediately that he had learned the meaning of celibacy--to be totally given to the Lord.

With a priestly vocation it may always start with good motives but usually they are mixed with some strange earthly motives. A 9 year old boy said to me: "I want to become a bishop." "But why?" I asked. "He has the nicest car in town." Such a car signifies that the bishop is held in great honor and the young lad wished to be honored. He may someday become a priest, even a bishop, but he will realize later that it means service and renouncement. For many others a vocation begins with an understanding of the need of souls. They hear the cry of so many souls abandoned. Why become a lawyer; there are so many already. Why not become a priest for so many have need. Even he, however, doesn't realize the true meaning of being a celibate. Celibacy does not only mean renouncing marriage. There is not present yet the fullness of vocation to the life of celibacy, but it is a good beginning. Before taking the oath before subdeaconate he should understand that this is a great grace, a sign

of predilection. He is not first of all renouncing but primarily receiving a grace, a great gift of God, a higher way to be totally given to the Lord and together with the Lord to be given to the service of the whole Church.

Yet there is renouncement! The foundation of the whole redemptive work of Christ is nothing other than the power of His love, but His love is expressed in sacrifice. So also the love of the Church must be expressed in many sacrifices united together with The Eucharistic sacrifice which is the sacrifice of our Lord. There is sacrifice; there is renouncement of self; there is renouncement of wonderful earthly goods. I always insist that celibacy consists of a renouncement of a wonderful good because often in listening to older priests I felt they had a misunderstanding concerning marriage. They spoke of women as if they were only 50% of men. Read Malachias 1. One must have the highest esteem for married people and marital love and desire it as a great earthly good, considering this desire as both natural and right. Only then can he offer the best to the Lord; only then can he sacrifice this great earthly good for an infinitely higher good and be a witness of the fullness of grace and full undivided surrender to the Lord. This means sacrifice, but it should not be a deep suffering or frustration for a man. If that is so, one does not understand celibacy. A Catholic priest declared once he became sick because of celibacy. A Protestant psychologist asked him: "Do you fully realize what is the meaning of your priesthood?" The priest was quite surprised. The doctor ordered him first to make a sincere meditation on the priesthood and his idea of it; then return and see whether celibacy is still making him sick. It is true that one is hurt and frustrated if he does not have a high ideal of undivided love for the Lord, if he does not grasp the meaning of having been called not only to common holiness but also called to be a witness to the universal vocation of sanctity. Then, it is not a sacrifice that kills but rather a sacrifice that prepares us for the glory of the Risen Lord.

If someone feels in his soul the desire for marriage and for a woman, and he becomes sick over such a desire; then let him make a deep examination of conscience to determine if he still has the Christian ideal of the priesthood. But I insist that there remains always the aspect of renouncement. If you wish never to be frustrated in your souls by celibacy, if you want it to be the full development of the whole person in the light of the love of the Lord and of service to men; then bring those sacrifices that are necessary to protect celibacy. Those sacrifices are numerous; one cannot watch every day 2-3 hours of television instead of making his meditation. One cannot look at all sorts of magazines and pictures of sex appeal if he doesn't wish to be frustrated in the depths of his soul. One cannot yield to all the desires of the lower nature if he wants to be a witness of undivided love to the Lord. Every day we must bring our sacrifices which are necessary to protect the sanctuary of undivided love.

Once a priest, a good spiritual friend of mine, told me that occasionally he feels some envy when he sees a happy father of 8-12 children. He said that it's not so much that he would desire to love and be loved by a woman as it is to be a proud father of well-educated children. I asked him how he conquered these moments. He responded that at these moments he realizes that he is a father in the highest manner and becomes filled with joy. He realizes that he is the father of his people and shares their sorrow and joy. It is necessary to be sensitive, to have a clear knowledge and a human heart to know what marriage and marital love are and what is the good pride of a father. Only then can we realize how greater is our vocation to be sharers of the spiritual joys and sorrows of our people. It is the Spirit of the love of Christ which gives us this great openness and love that really fulfills our personality in the service of God and neighbor.

Meditation XIV

VIRGINITY AND SERVICE

"I had a vision; I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. Then I heard a sound from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud peals of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing on their harps. They sang a new song before the throne and before the four living beings and the elders. No one could learn the song except those one hundred and forty-four thousand who have been purchased from the earth. They are those who preserved complete virginity, because they are celibates. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are purchased from among men, first fruits for God and for the Lamb. No lie was found on their lips; they are without blemish."

Apocalypse 14:1-5

A deep understanding of virginity was seen from the earliest times in the cultural aspect: as St. Augustine says: "We do not praise them only because they are chaste, but we praise them because they are consecrated to God." Thus consecration in this sense, that they are ordained for the praise of God. We see the full meaning of this consecration in its relation to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the celebration of the loving sacrifice of Calvary and at the same time it is a participation in the heavenly liturgy,

We meditated previously that virginity has as its deepest meaning undivided love. But it is a love as that of the love of the Redeemer; that love that has offered itself as holocaust and that love that makes Him in all eternity the Lamb standing before the throne of the Father and makes Him for all eternity the acceptable sacrifice. Thus, what are needed in renouncing self for the preservation of virginity are sacrifices united with the shedding of the blood of the Redeemer. In comparison with this shedding of blood these sacrifices are quite small. Even more important, virginity and its sacrifice unite us already to the heavenly liturgy. This heavenly liturgy is the praise of the 144,000 who were elected, who knew the New Son. All elected will know and sing this new song. All are chosen that they may love the Lord with undivided love in this time of the fullness of grace. But it is necessary also to have the witness of those chosen who already in this life feel and understand it ever better what great joy it is to be alone with the Lord and to

be united to the Lord, giving self in love to His Church.

Now we can compare, after this first foundation, undivided love and sacrifice. We can show the relationship between undivided love and total service. Some think, and I feel it is an error, that the whole reason for celibacy is to make pastoral work easier and to have no hindrance in this work because of a family. Especially at a time of persecution, they say it is necessary because those without wives can resist more easily. All these reasons are true if they do not hide from our gaze the first and essential reason of celibacy, that is, to be totally given to the Lord and to be assimilated to the Lord's love for the Church. The prime element is the exclusive love for Christ and together with Christ for His Spouse, all the redeemed. The second element flowing from this first is total service. Together they form an organic unity.

I know how much you appreciate the marriage course of Father Louis Janssen. He has brought to light one essential point: that marriage is assimilation of love for the Redeemer and from this assimilation flows the great service of life. When married people do not want many children and do not desire as many children as they could have, they prove they do not love one another in a proper way. We must promote in our pastoral work the great love of married people, a love assimilated to the love of Christ. Then we will know that they will want as many children as providence allows them. If we impose on them to have children without maintaining love, then they will not desire children and if they do have children they will not properly educate them.

So it is with celibacy! If a thousand times we propose: you must keep it, you must do it; we get nowhere. One priest said to me: the breviary is such a burden; meditation is nothing. But the Lord promised that after my life He will give me a reward. His people, however, were not satisfied with his work; he did so much useless work. We had a long talk together concerning hard work and that Christ will save him because he is working. The truth of the matter is that the foundation of the holy service of the Church is the "divinus opus". If the Church praises God as she can and must, then she will always be a missionary Church and will proclaim the wonderful tidings of the Lord who has called us from darkness into wonderful light. So it is with celibacy. If we love our Lord and desire his nearness, then we will prove our love with undivided total service for immortal souls. Here is a service that is a witness of the love of the Lord and a love of the redeemed.

That means, dear friends, the primacy of prayer. I know and I had the happy experience to see how so many American priests just desire to pray better. I received a flood of letters concerning the article in Worship magazine on the breviary. Many priests wrote me during the past year: "I have learned once more what it is to pray. Everyday I pray and thank you for revealing this to me." How many desire to be men of prayer! It is a danger today to give first place

to organizational activity and give little place to prayer and not an honest place to prayer life.

Celibacy does not mean frustration and fulfillment of a law. Celibacy is a joyful reality, the foundation of a wonderful priestly activity, and undivided love, a life of prayer. You wish to do much for the Lord and you wish to pray. Surely this is so. But perhaps you have not yet seen how much one must pray, if he wishes to do much for the Lord. The saints were men of prayer and thus could develop such an incredible activity. I am unfortunately not a saint, but I have at least made this experience: if I never diminish the time of prayer, if I give first place to prayer, then I am able to work harder and better and this work is blessed by the Lord. But when it is a question of work and I suppress my second meditation and visit to the Eucharist during the day, then my work doesn't go very well. We must be men of prayer! This is my personal witness and I wish to give it wholeheartedly to you. If you wish to be men who do the best work for the Church and for immortal souls, then be men of prayer! If you wish your celibacy to be radiant and filled with the power of the resurrection, then be men of prayer!

There are many discussions about celibacy for priests. I have received many letters, sometimes from women who ask: "Is it true that the Council will allow priests to marry because it has already made a conditional promise?" These demands come daily -- perhaps they think I know more inside information. But I must disappoint all these girls.

I have a warm heart for fallen-away priests. Often I do not reply to letters, even kind ones. But if I receive a letter from a civilly married priest I always write, because perhaps I could help one through patient friendship to learn to be fully continent, even though obliged to educate his children. I think the Church should allow them to marry validly, but at the same time the Church cannot do this unless it makes clear that they cannot be saved without much penance. Pope John has declared that celibacy will not be abolished by the Council but rather strengthened. But John also emphasized with tears in his eyes that we should be very kind to such priests. I know from experience that John, during his agony, prayed several times for these priests living outside the sacraments and the priestly service. He offered his pains that the Church will find the solution to emphasize celibacy but still to show full mercy to these poor priests. May the Church find a solution yet make clear to them that they can only be saved through penance, showing them how wrong it is to promise and not to keep it.

Today there is another question that the Church is considering. If there is a real movement toward unity, then the Church will ordain all Lutheran and Anglican ministers. They will ordain them priests as the Apostles did to those men who were faithful to one wife. But the Church can do this without suffering harm only if there is a strong priesthood in the Church which gives joyful witness

to virginity. So it is one more reason to make us realize what celibacy is and what it means to live it in a richer meaning so that the Church can be so lenient and broadminded. The oriental church always had some married priests. But thank God that in the majority of the Eastern Church there are many vocations to celibacy.

At the beginning of the first half of the last century about 200 priests of southern Germany wrote a pamphlet against celibacy. And the whole pamphlet was based on the question: how can the Church oblige a whole group of healthy men to keep celibate. Adam Moehler wrote the answer and he told his confreres: the question is wrong, and therefore you come to a wrong answer. The question is not how the Church can oblige such a state. The whole legislation guarantees freedom of choice. No one can be obliged. But the Church as spouse of Christ can hope that the Holy Spirit is anointing and consecrating many young men with this high vocation. The Church trusts in the Lord that He can do this.

There was a German author who, when he was a seminarian, fell in love with a girl quite strongly. Respectfully the girl met him during vacation and he related to her how on one side the vocation to the priesthood called him, and how on the other side the desired marriage with her. They prayed, and the girl, very much in love with him as he was with her, said to him: God is jealous and a consuming fire of jealousy for those whom he loves. If I know that God calls you to the priesthood I can never take you away from him. This noble girl helped this young seminarian to make the sacrifice. He became a great and holy priest, a man who did much for the renewal of theology and of faith and who did much to promote a deeper understanding of celibacy.

I think we should see the signs of the time. In deep mercy with those suffering and with a great desire for the unity of Christians, we must be urged to regard celibacy as a high vocation and live it with all the necessary sacrifices and expect a great and deep peace and joy in our personality.

The Eucharist is the great sign of the end of time and virginity is a reality of this end of time full of grace. When the Jews and even the disciples were scandalized by the words: "Who eats My flesh has everlasting life", the Lord spoke on the Spirit. The flesh is nothing, the Spirit is vivifying. The great power of the time between the first and second coming is the Holy Spirit, given us by the Risen Lord who has ascended to the throne at the right hand of the Father. Only a spiritual man can rejoice fully in the celebration of the liturgy and have a full faith to believe in this mystery and to see everything in this light; and only a spiritual man who has conquered the desire of the lower nature in the power of the Spirit will give the full witness of the meaning of virginity.

The Eucharist is the feast of the Saviour's victory, and virginity proclaims that victory to the world. The sign of the spiritual man and also the characteristic sign of the virgin is watchfulness. That is made clear by several parables. "Watch therefore for you do not know the hour your Lord will come. But of this be assured that if the householder knew at what hour the master was coming, he would have watched and not let his house be broken into." And in chapter 25 of St. Matthew we have the parable of the virgins.

"On that day the same will happen in the kingdom of heaven that once happened to ten bridesmaids who, being provided with their lamps, had gone out to meet the bridegroom. Now, five of these were foolish, and five wise: the foolish, though provided with their lamps, had yet taken no oil with them; the wise, on the contrary, had besides their lamps taken oil with them in their jars. But the bridegroom was long in coming, and so they all nodded off to slumber and, finally, slept. Suddenly, at midnight, a shout is raised: "Wake up there! The Bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" At this, all the bridesmaids woke up and began to trim their lamps. Then the foolish said to the wise: "give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." But the wise demurred. "There might not be oil enough for both us and for you," they said; "better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." So they went to buy some; but meanwhile the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready entered with him to take part in the festivities. Then the door was barred. Later the other bridesmaids arrived; but when they pleaded, "O Sir, Sir, open the door for us," back came his answer, "Upon my word, I have nothing to do with you." Keep awake therefore; you know neither the day nor the hour."

Every hour of grace, every "chairoi", should be seen in the light of the coming of the Lord: the first and last coming. Be watchful to all chances that God gives us. Be watchful everytime that God puts us to the test. This watchfulness of the spiritual man will be a guarantee for keeping and fulfilling his solemn promise of celibacy. Amen.

Meditation XV

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

"He also took bread into his hands and, after saying grace, broke it into portions, which he gave to them with these words: 'This is my body, which is about to be given for your sake. Do this as my memorial.' He did the same with the cup when supper was over, and said: 'This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood, which is about to be shed for your sake.'

They also had a discussion among them as to which one in their group should be considered the greatest. He said to them: 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their princes have themselves styled benefactors. That must not be your way! No, the greatest in your group must be like the youngest, and the leader like the servant. For example, which is the more distinguished, the diner at table or the waiter in attendance? The diner at table, of course, and yet, I am in your midst like a waiter in attendance. You have, however, stood by me in my trials; and therefore, as my Father has willed that I should inherit royal power, so I, in turn, will to you the rights of royalty, namely, to eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and be seated on thrones with jurisdiction over the Twelve Tribes of Israel."

Luke 22:19-30

Christ is what is expressed by his very name, the "Anointed One", the High Priest of the new and eternal covenant. In Hebrews we find, "Heaven has sworn and will not go back on its word: Thou art a priest forever." How far superior must the covenant be of which Christ is the guarantee! We are sharers of this priesthood, the great gift to the Church along with the Eucharist. The priesthood is a special mystery which helps the People of God to understand and to realize better that we are a kingdom of priests and sharers of the sacrifice of Christ. We priests, as ministers of the new covenant, speak in Christ's own name over the bread, "This is my body" and over the wine, "This is my blood." In his name we proclaim, "Your sins are forgiven." We proclaim also the word of the Lord, "sic dicit Dominus." "Whoever listens to you listens to Me, whoever rejects you rejects Me and whoever rejects Me rejects the One who sent me." It is an immense dignity and yet the depths of the mystery of the priesthood of the new covenant is to be seen in the diaconate, in the humility of service.

This meditation will be the expression of our gratitude to the Lord who gave the Church the priesthood and calls us to be sharers of this priesthood. We shall consider four points: 1) the priest is by his very priesthood a sharer of the humility and the obedience of Christ; 2) only as a sharer of his humilities will a man be the sharer of the glory of the High Priest, and 3) humility preservess the purity and power of the Word of God, and 4) it is through humility that our pastoral service becomes an efficacious witness of the kingdom of God.

1. Priest as sharer of the humility and obedience of Christ.

Priesthood means a special vocation to be a sharer of the humility of Christ. It is not like the little boy who wishes to become a bishop because a bishop has the best car in town. Yet everyone can look into his own soul and see if there isn't present the idea that the priesthood brings some privilege to him. We must see the priesthood from the very depths of dogma and not only from an ascetical motive; we must view it in light of the truth of salvation.

The consecration of the human nature of Christ to be the High Priest, for whom the Father has sworn an oath, coincides perfectly both metaphysically and with the will of God. He entered the world assuming the nature of a slave (Phil.2:7) and at that moment when the Word emptied Himself by assuming the nature of a slave, this human nature, assumed by the Divine Word, is consecrated to the dignity of high priest. The highest exercise of priesthood is the deepest act of humility. He humbled Himself and in obedience accepted even death on the cross. / Therefore, this must be the rule of those who are sharers of His priesthood. Whoever wishes to be great must be your "diakonos", your "servant", and whoever will be first must be willing to be the slave of all in imitation of the Son of Man. He did not come to be served but to serve and to surrender His life as a ransom for many (Matt.20:28). Christ expresses his priestly attitude when he explains by his words and deeds: "I do not care about my own glory." To be a priest is to be directed totally to the glory of God and to be empty of oneself.

The prelude of the first consecration of priests and bishops is the most humble service of the High Priest. He washes the feet of His Apostles. It is true that this is also the prelude to the institution of the Eucharist which announces to all Christians that there is no other way to perfect unity with Christ but by washing the feet, that is, humble service of one's neighbor. But this act is especially expressive for those who celebrate the Eucharist. It is done to the Apostles so that they may understand that the priest in a higher way has no access to the Eucharist and his priesthood if he does not wash the feet of his neighbor, if he does not perform the most humble service. "I have set you an example. You are to do as I have done to you."

The washing of the feet is the prelude to the first consecration. After this act of humility they received their infinite power. They celebrated the perfect unity with Christ and no sooner did they do so then a dispute arose as to whom among them may be considered the greatest. The Lord permitted this; permitted it in divine providence as he would permit the doubt of the Apostle Thomas. It is to make us aware as to the greatest danger in the priesthood, falsifying it and making it inefficacious. So this infantilism of those who had been years in the school of the Lord, this unbelievable temptation of the Apostles, gave the Lord the occasion to preach the first sermon on the priesthood -- a sermon on humility. Wherever priests understand and realize this sermon, then their priesthood is great in the eyes of God and men.

Pope John, the very day of his coronation as Pope, refused so many explanations of what it means to be pope. What is first? The very kernel and foundation, the very precept that includes all the others and draws all the others behind it, is the word of the Lord: "Learn from Me because I am meek and humble of heart." Then Pope John asked all those present to pray for the Pope that he may improve in humility and meekness. I think Pope John, who knew history so well, knew the letter of Pius IX who after his coronation wrote to a good friend: "I beg you, please pray for me. Pray for me much. Here in the Vatican they do everything possible to induce me to the great vice of pride."

There are still so many Irish, German, Italian, and American Catholic traditions that do so much to seduce the young priest to pride in thinking that all honors were personally given to him, as if he were the very center of the Church, he himself and not the Lord. There is no greater danger for a priest and nothing can more falsify his priesthood and be more alien to the Lord than pride and vanity.

The Blessed Virgin Mary accepted her dignity as deaconness of salvation with the humble word: "I am the handmaid of the Lord." These words bring Mary into the most intimate union with the priesthood of the Son-of-Man for with them she receives the Word Incarnate. Yet she immediately runs to Elizabeth to be the handmaid in Elizabeth's house. Whoever understands what the high priesthood of Christ's means and what it means to be sharers of His priesthood, must know that the best priest can only be the best deacon -- servant.

It is theological truth though not dogma that the diaconate impresses an indelable seal to the soul of its recipient. That means that the foundation of priesthood is to be deacon, to be servant. And the higher one ascends in the participation of the priesthood of Christ, the higher is the obligation to be a servant of God, men, and all creatures. Priesthood means a special vocation, a more urgent one than that of the faithful, to be sharers of the humility of Christ.

2. Only as sharer of His humilities will a man be sharer of the power and glory of the High Priest.

St. Paul in Philippians explains how the Lord emptied himself until the highest act of priesthood "Obedience unto the cross." Then follows the Easter jubilee: "because of which God has exalted Him." The exaltation on the cross was the necessary condition for the exaltation to the throne in the heavenly liturgy. The paschal mystery of glory has as its foundation the humility and humble obedience of the Lord. It is the very center of his priesthood and there is only one priesthood. Our priesthood is nothing else than a sharing of the humility of our Lord.

St. Paul often returns to this mystery that a good apostle must be humble. For example, in 11 Corinthians where he suffers from misgivings and misinformation, he knows how exalted is his vocation: "You are our letter written on our hearts which is known and read by all men. You are the letter of Christ composed by us, written not in ink but by the Spirit of God." Then he presents the glory of the New Law, the glory of the deaconate: "Such is the assurance I have through Christ to God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything from ourselves but our sufficiency is from God. He also it is Who has made us fit servants of the New Testament not of the letter but of the Spirit." Here he returns to the glory on the face of Moses which was only a small symbol of the glory that is on the deaconate of the New Testament. He finds it natural that the apostle must be humble. In chapter 4 he says: "We do not preach ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves merely as your servants in Jesus, for God who commands light to shine out of darkness has shone in our hearts to give knowledge of the glory of God, shining on the face of Christ Jesus." This glory in this context is that glory of the One Who emptied himself, being obedient to death. "But we carry this treasure of vocation in vessels of clay to show that the abundance of the power is God's and not ours. In all things we suffer tribulation but we are not distressed. We are sore oppressed but not destitute, we endure persecution but we are not forsaken, we are cast down but do not perish, always bearing about in our bodies the dying^o Christ, so that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our bodily frame. For we, the living, are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh. Thus death is working in us and life in you."

This is a tremendous program for a priest. Death is working in us but then life in you. If the priest really dies to himself, surrenders himself, then life is really working in those who are the object of his service. God chooses the humble ones: Mary, the humble handmaid. We see the great servants of God as humble men; humble men were at all times the great instruments.

Let us recall two saints who were extraordinarily humble by divine providence. St. Clement Hofbauer had a long, humble road to the priesthood as a poor worker. When he was finally sent by his superior general to the missions, he founded a wonderful flourishing mission in a province in Poland. One day everything ended with jail. He began once more, was deprived of his priestly right and suspended with no permission to preach or to celebrate Mass. It was unreasonable! He began once more in Switzerland and once more his brethren were dispersed. He went to Vienna, was received by the police and brought to jail as a thief. There followed long treatments of similar kind. He humbled himself so often that he eventually became the Apostle of Vienna, the man who renewed the pastoral work in Vienna and all of Austria.

Similarly we find humility as the characteristic of John Vianney, who in France was surely the greatest pastoral genius of the past century. He was not very esteemed by his professors. They often used unfitted expressions about him. Nor was he esteemed by the bishop. When he had built up a good parish, the bishop sent him a young assistant with the order to watch over the pastor who was to be obedient to this young assistant in all things. If we consider the pilgrimage of hundreds of thousands of people to this man, we can only understand this miracle if we understand his humility. There is the glory of God!

3. Humility preserves the purity and power of the Word of God.

It is a tremendous power to speak in the name of Christ: "these are the words of God", "sic dicit Dominus." But the first condition is to be a hearer of the Word of God, to be totally given to the word. I have already told you about Pope Paul VI who told me before I preached his retreat: "sine timore. We need the whole power of the gospel as well as those of simple faith." With this simple expression he expressed the great humility of a pope who puts himself in humility under the Word of God and wishes to be given totally to that Word. We must study Holy Scripture, study the Word of God addressed to us in the liturgy, and we must be given to the word of God and to Christ. The priest, servant and minister of the Word of God, must hide himself behind the word.

In the liturgy it is the Lord Himself who proclaims His good tidings. There it is evident that we are only humble instruments. The liturgy must be the center of the proclamation of the word of God. Thirty or forty years there was not a nice word in Germany on the method of the missionaries in that country. "Long and loud the preaching, but the Mass rapidly." It has changed today. Preaching must be integrated into the Gospel as the constitution on the sacred liturgy says: "Christ preaches."

St. Paul often recalls this truth, how the priest must be humble. He sees it as characteristic of the priest and the apostle. In I Corinthians 2 he says: "The Word I spoke, the Gospel I proclaimed, did not sway you with subtle arguments, but carried conviction with spiritual power so that your faith may not be built on human wisdom but upon the power of God." He explained this in the preaching of the cross, in the weakness and suffering of the apostle.

We must be aware in our preaching of the primacy of grace. We will not use psychological violence and pressure for we will not lead men to the blessed freedom of the children of God in this way. We must put our confidence in the power of the word of God. That is only possible if we are very aware of the primacy of grace.

A great temptation of young priests and sometimes even of the older, is vanity. This vanity is especially visible in the anxiety a young priest has before his sermon. Why is he nervous? No other reason than his vanity. Because if he so worried for the glory of god he would strive for sanctity day and night. It is vanity, nothing else. The wrong words, phrases, etc. come from vanity. It is the vanity of the famous preachers and the vanity of the young assistant. Years ago we had a convention of all the superiors of preaching congregations and the theme was the renewal of preaching. One veteran preacher said: "Learn better from us rhetoric and you do not need this babbling of renewal from the Gospel." He proposed himself also as president of the congregation but he received only one vote. He was a good preacher. Next year I had to give some lectures at a German university where he was preaching a mission for students of the university. The students after the second day decided to attack him with eggs and similar things telling him he was a skunk of vanity. The authorities had to stop the mission. Women still weep with such a preacher, but youngsters today wish nothing but sincerity. It is a scandal to them if our preaching is just a demonstration of vanity.

Let us give an example of a young assistant. He was privileged to study at Munich and following ordination came to this parish. His second sermon was a failure because he lost his memory. He had to descend without glory from the pulpit. He was so nervous and he did it the third time. He refused to preach again! One day his professor came and asked the pastor how his student was doing. The pastor answered: "He does well, he doesn't preach!" The professor wished to help and decided to preach the following Sunday. He came well prepared, started, stopped half way and said Amen, and stepped from the pulpit. At dinner nobody said anything but finally the assistant said: "How terrible it must be for a famous professor to have to stop without being able to think of the next word." The professor answered: "Why no, it is a normal thing." So the young assistant found he could start once more. Now he is a normal preacher because of the act of charity of this scholar.

There is vanity in all forms; we must face this problem. I shall give you some good and bad examples. I was in a parish preaching and the pastor was out farming. I asked him: how much time can you spend farming. He said: "I am a good preacher so I can spend 90% of my time farming." The next day an old girl of 80 years went with me from the sacristy to the rectory and said: "Are we glad that sometimes the Redemptorists come and preach the word of God to us because what our pastor tells us is simply stupidity." I said: "But please, even if your pastor has simple and humble sermons it is still the word of God." She replied: "No, Father, I tell you without anxiety of committing venial sin it is stupidity." When you start your preaching there will be some old girl who will say: "Father, it was just wonderful." It is because they have mercy on you! And you believe it as if it were an admiration of your ability.

Another example. I had a good friend to whose parish I came several times. He said to me: "I have never made a great impression on my professors at school. I have strange ideas and I would like to have you tell me. I understand what the moralists teach on the abuse of sexual power, on masturbation. I always considered it an animal act. But our professors never told us anything of how unbelievably dirty it is if one abuses the word of God by his vanity." This was enlightening to me, for it is masturbation to abuse the words of God. Humility guarantees the power of the Word of God. You make it your own word if you are indulging in vanity. But be not surprised that in spite of your good will the devil tempts you.

Once I heard a priest descending from the pulpit saying to himself: "Friend," said he, "I don't go to preach because of you." I asked him: "Who is your friend?" "My vanity," he replied. It is one of the great dangers, a greater danger than self-abuse. If you are fighting against this danger, you become a powerful instrument. You are writing with the spirit of God a letter that recommends you.

4. Pastoral service becomes an efficacious witness by humility.

This is the great doctrine in the Cenacle. St. John refers in one part to the unity of the apostles. Luke relates the other part, the condition for this unity, namely, humility. We are only servants of one another if we are humble.

That is also the very heart of the matter as to collegiality. Generally it was wonderful to listen to the bishops and their deep insights as to collegiality. But there were some who considered it as one-sided power -- more power for the Curia or for the bishops? I had the impression that some bishops thought that now we will have more power than the Curia. But they also realized that collegiality is renouncement of self. Collegiality is not who has more power but it makes the whole corpus episcoporum a unity. It is

serviability. Wherever the pastoral plan demands it, the bishops have one plan for the whole country; and wherever the unity of pastoral efficiency demands it, then gladly they accept the plan of Peter. Likewise, wherever for greater efficacy unity is demanded, then the successor of Peter will gladly call upon the help of his bishops. It is a question of renouncing oneself. This collegiality must also be visible in the priests of the diocese. Everyone has good ideas; sometimes I even think I have better ideas than my superiors. But if I do not let the decision to the superior, they do not work.

I was working, and it was a great experience for me, from 1953-1957 at least every half-year in the general missions. The whole secret of bringing together 100-150 pastors in one area is the willingness of each to renounce his own beautiful ideas. For if everyone wishes to realize his own ideas, then we realize nothing, for then we work in different directions. Wherever one's charity and unity renounces his own ideas, later they will be realized. For some pastors they only accept an idea if the curate is capable of convincing him that it was the pastor himself who really thought of it. For unity, we must sacrifice the monopoly. However, we must be indulgent to the vanity of our neighbor because there is enough vanity on our own part.

Pastoral work means service. There is a beautiful prophecy in Ezechial 34 against the egoistic pastors: "And the word of the Lord came to me saying: Son of Man, prophesy concerning the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to the shepherds: Thus saith the Lord God: Woe to the shepherds of Israel that fed themselves! Should not the flocks be fed by the shepherds? You ate the milk and you clothed yourselves with the wool and you killed that which was fat: but my flock you did not feed. The weak you have not strengthened and that which was sick you have not healed: that which was broken you have not bound up and that which was driven away you have not brought again: neither have you sought that which was lost: but you ruled over them with rigour and with a high hand... Thus saith the Lord God: Behold I myself will seek my sheep and will visit them. As the shepherd visiteth his flock in the day when he shall be in the midst of his sheep that were scattered, so will I visit my sheep and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I myself will pastor my sheep."

It is wonderful how already in the Old Testament we have a picture of our High Priest who is the real shepherd pastoring his sheep with His own blood. You have not in the United States the same strange anti-clericalism as in Italy and other places. But sociological studies have shown a good deal even in America. There is no other means to overcome this, which is the heritage of Europe transplanted in America, than service. It demands a lot

of humility of the bishop to remain in dialogue with his priests. It demands a lot of humility now from the clergy to open a sincere and respectful dialogue with the laity.

Let us take our refuge in the Blessed Virgin Mary. She, the nearest to the Lord, the intimate sharer of the work of redemption, is also the prototype of the Church's humility. And we all, especially us priests, must imitate her. It is the only way to have a more intimate sharing in the work of redemption of Christ, the High Priest. Amen.

Meditation XVI

THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"A great sign appeared in the sky: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and cried out because of the pain and anguish of childbirth.

Another sign was seen in the sky. Suddenly there appeared a huge red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his head were seven diadems. His tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman on the point of childbirth, that he might devour her son as soon as she had been delivered of him. She gave birth to a male child who is destined to rule all nations with an iron rod. The child was caught up to God and to his throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God. Here she would be nourished for a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

...Then I heard a loud voice in heaven. 'Now the salvation which God brings about,' it said, 'his power and royalty, and the authority of his Christ have been established because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, he who accused them before our God day and night. But they conquered him by means of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and because they despised life even to the point of being willing to die...' Apocalypse 12:1-12

In all our meditations on the sacraments we have encountered the Church, the "great sign" of the mercy of God and the "great sign" of Christ's love because she is his Beloved Spouse, and her vocation is to unite all people and educate them in a response of undivided love toward their Lord. The Church is a great sign. The Blessed Virgin, the Mother of our Lord and our Mother, is the prototype of the Church. She is intimately associated with the new covenant and with the sacraments. She herself is a "signus magnus" but always in intimate union with the Church whose prototype and heart she is. She is a great sign that leads to a deeper understanding of the Church and of Christ who is in every respect the sign of the love of the heavenly Father.

We shall consider the Blessed Virgin under three aspects: (1) as a sign of God's mercy, (2) as a sign of eschatological separation, and (3) as a sign that leads to Christ, the new Lord.

1. Sign of the mercy of God.

The Blessed Virgin is a great and powerful sign of God's mercy. The sun is her clothes. In her who is crowned in heaven and who is in the glory of Christ with soul and body, grace has reached its fullness. This great sign clothed with the sun shows us what is the dignity of these humble signs, the sacraments, and what is the importance of our humble earthly life. All this will lead us to the fullness, to the glory in Christ and with Christ.

In past time her sign is considered as a sign of mildness: she is the Mother of Mercy. The crown of 12 stars shows her as the Mother of Christ together with the 12 apostles imploring the Spirit of Christ for the young Church. She is queen of the apostles; she who herself did not preach the Gospel within the Church, but who had announced the coming of Christ within the house of her cousin Elizabeth; she who announced the first miracle of Christ; she who by her humility prepared the way of Christ.

Her main apostolate is, as Scripture shows, prayer. There, in prayer, is prepared all apostolate, the fruitfulness of the Church's apostolate. The principle act of the apostolate is to implore the power of the Holy Spirit. It is her privilege to be the prototype of the Church who puts all her trust in God, who is the "orante", the mother who prays for her children, the mother who recognizes by her life the primacy of grace. She teaches us that the power and fruitfulness of our apostolate has as its basis the life of prayer.

She is a sign of the motherly care of the Church. The Apostle expresses this motherly care for every soul: "For you are my children and I am in travail over and over again until you take the shape of Christ" (Galatians 4:19). Indeed, Mother Church is in continual travail over us. There is so much remaining until we reach the shape of Christ.

We are wondering what it means that this woman, who should bring forth a child that rules over the whole world, was in travail and cried out in anguish of deliverance. For it is, at least common opinion, that the Blessed Virgin had the privilege to bring forth the child without pain as a sign of her virginity. But she was in travail all the time; from the time when Simeon told her that this Child is destined to be a sign which men would reject. She was in travail in her heart when the world had no place for her child. She was in travail when the dragon, Herod, wished to devour her child. She was in travail all the time of the exile, and she was in travail for us under the cross where we were entrusted to her: "Women, behold thy son."

She is the Mother of Mercy! She is through the will of Her Son, our Mother. She made that experience expressed by the wise woman: "I had two sons and they came to blows in the field where there were none to interfere, and one gave the other a blow which killed him. And now the whole clan is at my heels, give up the murderer so that they may kill him in vengeance for his brother's blood." We are this brother; this brother who has killed her beloved Son through our sins, and she has the high vocation of imploring the mercy of God in behalf of our sins.

I understood this vocation of the Blessed Virgin deeper through the human experience of knowing a mother of a murderer. It was a misty October day in 1936 in a town of southwestern Germany. That morning, when the townspeople went to the daily Mass, they heard terrible crying--a child of 15 years, a girl, was found outside the town murdered in the most cruel manner. The people were praying in church and this pious woman was first praying "requiem aeternam" and "Hail Mary" for the poor child. She was praying for the parents that they might not revolt against God. She was also praying for the murderer. So slowly she prayed: "Hail Mary, full of grace" for the poor mother of the murderer. She told me later that a terrible certitude came upon her that she had just prepared for herself. It was her own son! Nobody in the town would have thought that a young medical student could have been the murderer but she didn't know how but at that moment she knew it was he. She offered her life, her life that would be a shame, if only the Lord would give grace to her son to convert himself, to come back to the Church and do penance. He was found out because he lost a letter from a doctor's wife, a love letter, and the woman finally had to confess to whom she had sent this letter. He was condemned to death. He had the grace to die in the spirit of penance. I saw the letter he wrote to his mother where he gratefully acknowledged that her penance perhaps is the only one that could save him from a bad and godless life. This mother told me about 20 years later: "Father, is it not terrible. I sincerely promised God never to quarrel or complain if He granted that my son be converted, nevertheless I still feel the temptation to complain."

She surely is a "mulier fortis", an image, and only a poor image of the Mother of our Lord and our Mother. She, in travail and in anguish of deliverance, implores the mercy of God for us. God Himself compares his merciful love to the merciful love of a mother. Isaiah 49:15 says: "What! Can a woman forget her infant that is still unweaned; so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet I will not be forgetful of you."

God gave us good mothers in order that we should have a deeper understanding of His love: the love of the Father who loves us more than all mothers can love.

God gave me another experience to realize the love of a mother and His love. In the beginning of February, 1943, after the fall of Stalingrad, I with 3000 other German soldiers, lived 5 days and

nights on the mercy of poor people who gave us their last bread so that all of us wouldn't die of hunger and cold. Poor people gave us their horses so that I could bring back 15 wounded friends. On the last of these nights, before we joined the other units of the German army, poor people received us into their homes not far from the road where the Russian army was moving. Throughout that night the old mother and father tended to my poor friends. I myself was too tired. In the morning they wakened us, gave us potatoes and helped us to move once more. At the last moment I asked them-- I hadn't told them I was a priest--"what was the motive for such a great charity. You endanger your own lives for people who have brought such misery and wounds upon Mother Russia. What's the reason?" The mother told me with such a great simplicity: "We have four boys in the Russian army. We are praying everyday that God may send them back to us. How can we dare pray today if we would not be aware that your mother sends the same prayer to God for your return." This is the heart of a mother!

All this serves to illustrate the grandeur of God's mercy. That which speaks in a unique way to our heart is the sign that the mother of Christ, under the cross, received this great command, "Behold, your son!" That we poor sinners, we all are encouraged by the Lord: "Behold, your mother!" It is not as if God, unmerciful should be made merciful by the Mother of Christ, our Mother. God's mercy and love, since He is God, are infinitely greater than all the love and mercy of creatures; also His is infinitely greater than the mercy of our Blessed Mother. But we could not understand so deeply the mercy of God if He Himself would not have given us this great sign after Christ, the greatest sign. It is a sign that speaks to our heart more than all others.

St. Alphonsus was a reformer of missionary activity during his time. Until his time, in Naples, the missionaries preached only the so-called "eternal truths": sin, hell, punishment; then they left the pastors of the parishes to continue with the other minor truths. Alphonsus preached the first week on the "eternal truths" but followed it with a week on Christian "joy". He combined the preaching of both weeks at the end with a talk on the Mother of Mercy. Though he was a reformer, he later expressed his experience that all the traditional strong sermons on sin, judgement, etc. did not convert as many souls as one sermon on the Mother of Mercy.

I have relatively little experience, but at the few missions and retreats I preached, many great sinners came with confidence to confession after my sermon on the Mother of Mercy.

Dear brethren, if we are real sons of this Mother, we must be merciful. Those who are rough show that they have no personal relationship with her. I dislike very much mariologists who are rough people. I do not believe they are mariologists. They do not put their heart into their work because whoever loves the Blessed Virgin is kind and merciful.

That mother of the murderer told me that in those terrible days when it was known that her son was the murderer, the parish priest frequently visited her and was so kind. She told me several times: "how good must God be to us if even a poor man, a priest is so kind to us." We are good priests only if people realize through us in a similar way as through Mary, how good God must be.

I know a parish priest who had been in the Curia from the start but who wished to be a parish priest. His health was not good; several times on Sunday I came to help him preach and celebrate Mass. Once I told him: "I always like to come to you because you are a sympathetic man." He replied: "When I was studying in the seminary my professors said the same thing, and they tried to keep me for a second year in their courses." But one of his parishioners told me: "If I would guess that God in our times would come on earth and live with us, I would imagine that he would be as kind and as good as our pastor." It is a wonderful tribute! After the war when refugees came from eastern Germany, this priest took three of the poorest families into his home. Over 300 refugees were perfectly integrated into the parish; even those who never practiced their religion. When he died, he didn't leave one penny, though he had come from a rich family, but his parish gave him the greatest funeral that could be given a priest.

This is a sign that we are in touch with Christ, that we are like the Blessed Virgin; if we also become merciful; if we are also in travail with our neighbor until he takes the shape of Christ.

2. Sign of eschatological separation.

The Blessed Virgin is a "signum magnum" in the eschatological battle. This is the intention of John in his Apocalypse to show that she is not sentimental but is a strong woman. Mother Church, and her prototype the Blessed Virgin, are strong. She experienced during her life with Christ that her child was destined to be a sign which men would reject and that her own heart had to be pierced. Christ is the great sign of contradiction and separation. In perfect unity with Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the Church are signs of separation in the eschatological battle. St. John in the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse gives a commentary on the Magnificat: "exaltavit humiles". The humble virgin has received the crown of 12 stars and is clothed with the sun. Besides this sign, there is another--the dragon. Pridelful as he is, he has not only one but 12 heads with 7 diadems on every one. "And yet there was not to be found a place in heaven for him."

Pride and allthose who do not wish to serve; they have no place in heaven. John sees in one vision the eschatological battle--the fight between the Child of Mary, children of the Church, and Satan who deludes the world. In one vision he sees the picture of the battle in heaven at the beginning. Many theologians said, as does Suarez, that the sign of separation for the angels was the humble son of the handmaid, Mary. All the angels would have been

ready to adore God in His divinity, but they were not ready to adore the God made man from the poor handmaid Mary. It is like the pride of men who state: "If I directly receive a command from God, in His divinity, then I will obey; but I will not put faith in and obey the modest superiors of the Church." Indeed the laws of Church are not as perfect as those of Paradise. The laws of the Church often need adaptation and adjustment. Likewise those men at the head of the Church are constantly saying as Christ Himself: "We are modest servants of God." Some are great saints, others are already saints, and others are on the road to sanctity. Yet there are still others who do not even manifest that they are striving for sanctity but they too are sent by Christ. We are put to the test if we accept the will of God through his humble servants; if we submit ourselves to the law of the Church.

Of course, I repeat that the Church is not a concentration camp and she cannot wish to have the obedience of slaves. Whoever wishes this does not represent the Church. The Church wishes an obedience in spirit and in truth, and this also means a humble obedience. Wherever there is question of a just law and the situation requires the preservation of unity of spirit through obedience to laws which do not urge us very much in themselves--we must be the most humble servants of Mother Church. God puts us to the test. The humble priest is a powerful man. He is feared by Satan. But a priest who still has pride, he is a comedian and is liked by the devil. If we are venerated of the Blessed Virgin, we must build our spiritual edifice on this fundamental virtue--humility! St. Augustine states: "If one asks me what is the first step on the way of sanctity I tell him, humility. And if he asks the second, I say humility. And if he asks the third step I will tell him humility. And whenever he will ask me the next step I will tell him it's a greater humility." Augustine was such a great theologian and pastor of the Church because of his own humility. In our own day we saw how great was the power over souls of a man, but he was not a genius nor Pope John. He was an intelligent man, but he was not a genius nor a great theologian. He was not a great man of diplomacy, but he was brilliant in his humility, and this humility won him the hearts of the world.

We must be humble! A priest or seminarian who strives toward sanctity will be tested by Satan. He will suggest to him that it is by his own virtue and forces that he is holy; he will make him a prideful man because he gets good results in examinations; he will make him prideful after delivering his first sermon. Satan will try and corrupt him whenever he does good. "Awake, be on the alert! Your enemy the devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking someone to devour. Resist him steadfast in the faith!" And as the Lord told Peter and those who have authority in the Church: "you must strengthen your brothers." We must listen to the Church. We must listen now to the Council and with a whole heart accept the work of the universal Church. We cannot cry to the Blessed Virgin "sub tuum praesidium" if we do not put our trust in the Spirit of God who works in the Church. There is only one power that guarantees us victory and

guarantees us to be sharers in this victory and glory of Christ--that is humility. The entire liturgy engraves it into our hearts during these days of Holy Week: "Christus factus est obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis." The Blessed Virgin by her assistance, as a living sign, calls it to our attention: "he humbles the lowly." There is no chant nor joy of Easter besides this "propter quod". On behalf of our humility we hope to be sharers of the victory and glory of Christ.

3. Sign that leads to Christ, the new Lord.

There is no doubt that the only one who can be called the "Lord" is He Who calls Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He Himself, not only by His example, but by his spirit and grace, is our Lord and life. But Christ uses humble means, as the sacraments, to lead us to Him. The sacraments have no meaning in themselves besides that which is their whole meaning: they are powerful works of Christ, signs leading us to Christ in surrender to Him.

So it is with the Blessed Virgin even more than John the Baptist. Her whole existence, her hands and fingers, are showing us Christ: "Ecce, Agnus Dei." Her whole existence by her humility leads us to Christ and gives us the rule for a good priest: not to bring attention to oneself but to die to oneself; to hide oneself and through her intercession, we can become signs of the mercy of God. If the priests of God are merciful throughout their lives in all their actions, God will extend to all our people and especially those deep in sin the experience of His infinite mercy. We are real servants of the Blessed Virgin if we acquire this art of hiding behind Christ. Then we are leading Christians on the road to sanctity. Then our existence tells them: "Be my imitators, as I am the imitator of Christ" by humility. The Way, the Truth, the Life is Christ. He is the Lord! Is it not a great vocation to lead people to Christ not only by word but also by our witness, a living sign of the merciful God?

Meditation XVII

THE SACRAMENTS AND MORTIFICATION (1)

"From that time on Jesus began to make plain to his disciples that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, suffer much at the hands of the elders, high priests, and Scribes, be put to death and on the third day rise again. At this Peter drew him aside and proceeded to lecture him. 'May God spare you, Lord', he said: 'this must never happen to you!' But he turned on Peter with the words: 'Back to your place; follow me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, for you do not take God's view of things, but men's.'

Then Jesus said to his disciples: 'If any one wants to become my follower, then he must renounce himself and shoulder his cross; then he may be a follower of mine. Indeed, he who is bent on saving his life, must part with it anyway; but he who freely parts with his life for my sake will secure it in the end. Clearly, what will it profit a man to gain the whole world when his life is forfeited in any case? Or, what price can a man pay down to purchase life forever? Furthermore: the Son of Man is to come hereafter wrapt in his Father's glory and escorted by his angels; and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct. I tell you truly: some of those present here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his royal state.'

Matthew 16: 21-28

Immediately before the great weakness of St. Peter we find his profession of faith; "Thou art the Anointed One, the Son of God.: After having prepared the apostles for this great belief that He was the Son of God, Christ began to show them that He had to suffer many things. Yet Peter didn't adhere to this belief. Precisely because he did not accept this strong admonition of the Lord, he was finally able to say: "I do not know this man." He knew the Lord who had performed so many miracles; he knew His power; but he did not yet intimately know the Lord Who had to be crucified before the Father would raise Him to glory.

We are well acquainted with this idea that the Lord first had to be tested and be the man of suffering and humiliation. We find this almost natural. We do not say like Peter: "This is far from you. But if the Lord puts us to the test, if we must suffer we so rapidly say to the Lord: "This should never happen to me." But our Lord has taught us always that there is no way of following Him and being His

disciple if one does not deny himself and take his cross upon himself every day. The words of Matthew in Chapter 16 are also related by Luke and Mark. They make it clear that the Lord said to all His disciples: "If anyone wishes to follow Me, let him deny himself."

Later on when he was purified through deep sorrow and through a greater love of the Lord, and when he had received the Power from above, St. Peter admonished the Christians: "Christ suffered on your behalf and left you an example, and thereby it is for you to follow in His steps. In His own Person He carried our sins so that we, having died to sin, might live to justice. By Christ's wounds you were healed." Once more he told the Christians how natural it was for the disciples of Christ to suffer. "My dearly beloved friends, do not be bewildered by the fire and ordeal upon you as though it were something extraordinary. It is your share in Christ's suffering and that is cause for joy. And when His glory will be revealed, your joy will be triumphant. If Christ's name is flung in your teeth as an insult, count yourself happy for then that glorious Spirit which is the Spirit of God is resting upon you." I do not know if any Apostle or Christian has expressed deeper or more wonderful words on the following of Christ than St. Peter.

Glorious is the gift of the Risen Lord Who could give us this glorious Spirit because He has given Himself first of all.

We try to come to a full understanding of how the sacraments teach us the great fundamental law of mortification: dying to oneself as the price for unity, as the condition for the fulfillment of the law of the new covenant, the law of the love of God and neighbor. Every sacrament has its specific teaching; and only if we listen to all the sacraments, only if we understand well this greatest flowering coming from the cross of the Lord, can we understand the full meaning of Christian mortification.

First of all baptism and mortification. Mortification is the basic reality of a Christian who is baptized into the death of Christ. Only if we accept this as the basic rule of our life will our life be full of hope; only then will the glorious Spirit, which is the Spirit of God, rest upon us. St. Paul makes it very clear in Romans 6: "If we die with Christ, we believe we shall come to life with him." But before everything will be fulfilled in our life we have to fight a hard battle against the wickedness of the old mode of existence; a battle that decides our death and life. In the 8th chapter of Romans Paul uses the word "mortification". He says clearly that there is a battle concerning death and life. "It follows, my friend that our lower nature has no claim on us. We are not obliged to live on that level. If you do so you must die. But if by the Spirit you put to death all the base pursuits of the lower nature, then you will live" (Romans 8: 12ff).

It is by the Spirit, by the power which the Risen Lord has given that we can put to death all the base pursuits of the lower nature. The Epistle to the Galatians states; "the lower nature sets its de-

sire against the spirit while the spirit fights against it." If one is a spiritual man and wishes to surrender himself totally to Christ, he will fight. It is not an imperative, it is a fact: he will fight if he is to some extent a spiritual man. He will fight the base pursuits of the lower nature. It is not only a battle for our own salvation--true, it is also for our own salvation--but it is together with Christ that we fight for the salvation of the whole world. It is by this that we are the sharers of His redeeming cup. So explained Paul in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ." This is the fundamental reality of baptism: "The life I now live is not my life, but Christ lives in me. And my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God Who loved me and sacrificed himself for me." That is the rule of the faith: "Who loved and sacrificed himself for me." Therefore we are crucified with Him.

In Galatians 5:17 Paul says: "The lower nature sets its desire against the spirit." Then he shows the fruit of the spirit: charity, peace, unity. Against these there is no law. But if one yields himself to those desires of the lower nature, there are the fruits of the lower nature: disorders, all kinds of sins against unity and charity. We have to fight against the lower nature because of the Redemption, because of the unity of the redeemed. Everyone must pay his price according to the grace Christ gave to him. So says the Apostle in the Epistle to the Colossians: "It is now my happiness to suffer for you. This is my way of helping to complete in my flesh the full suffering of Christ's affliction to be endured for the sake of His Body which is the Church." That is the vocation of the Apostle, but also the vocation of everyone who is a living member of the Body of Christ. For everyone there should be a supernatural happiness of faith in suffering for others.

What is the basic law, through the grace of baptism, which should be promoted and come to its fullness through the plenitude of the Spirit, through the gifts of the spirit which are abundantly given in the sacrament of confirmation? The Spirit that is given us in this sacrament of confirmation, the sacrament of Pentecost, is a spiritual force in the eschatological battle. Paul, in the 6th chapter to the Ephesians, says: "the battle not only against human weakness but against the wickedness of the fallen angels. For our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic power, against the powers and potentates of these dark worlds, against the super-human forces of evil in the atmosphere; therefore take up God's armor to this end; keep watch and persevere." These are very clear words showing true Christian existence; watchfulness, perseverance, but in the power of the Spirit; the whole armor of the faith, our belief in the cross of the Savior.

We have already made our meditation on confirmation and have seen that it is an assimilation to Christ in order to make the great testimony and witness until death. That means that one must be strong in preparing himself for the moments when God will put him to the test. St. Paul had prepared himself as the great athlete of the spirit. So he writes to the Corinthians who were great lovers of

athletes. They understood these things; at least as spectators. "Run to win the prize with a clear goal; but every athlete goes into strict training. They do it to win a fading wreath, but we a wreath that never fails. For my part I run with a clear goal before me. I'm like a boxer who does not beat the air. I bruise my own body and make it know its master for fear that after preaching to others, I should find myself rejected." Let us remain with this great athlete for a while.. I share the immense love of St. Chrysostom for St. Paul. Whenever I return to this great athlete I understand the meaning of Christian life better. Let us watch him. He is systematic: "I run with a clear goal before me." I also like sports. I was especially strong and good on my feet, so I participated in one of the great games in Bavaria. We had the best team and were sure to win. But our best man did not run to his goal; he ran to the other. We lost! I am still excited about it today; the stupid fellow! But I am much more excited about so many priests and seminarians who run, but run for the wrong goal. They run for all things sports and everything, but do not run systematically for the Lord. "I am like a boxer." Here there is a nice expression: "I bruise my own body." He uses a word only used by boxers: "A knock-out". He is watchful; he doesn't fight the air in only some routine asceticism. Routine is sometimes a good way to escape the reality. But we must be watchful, and always search out the pursuits of the lower nature which still persist, and bruise them. How does Paul do this? We have a picture of him in the "Acta Apostolorum" and in his own letters: "I put up with all that comes my way rather than offer any hindrance to the Gospel of Christ." That is his goal for which mortification is necessary: not to put any hindrance in the way of the gospel. He renounces a housekeeper, becomes a worker-priest (not forbidden at that time) and finds that it was a tremendous means of removing many hindrances to the gospel.

He is the great herald, the messenger of the freedom from the law, especially from the Old Testament ceremonila law. But when it is a question of winning Hebrews, he submits himself to all these ceremonies. Only he never created a hindrance by imposing them on others. If eating meat will be the downfall of my brother, I will not eat meat anymore, for I will not be my brother's downfall. Thus he admonishes the Corinthians who could buy cheap meat that had been sacrificed to the wrong gods. Because of no taxes, they had several privileges on the market. But Paul renounces the cheaper meat. This might be a rule for many businessmen and the clergy: to sometimes renounce free from tax, if it is a hindrance. Paul says to the Romans that he will not eat meat or wine for his whole life if it is a scandal and separates Hebrews and Gentiles. He renounces many things. He wishes to become everything for all men. That is really a blow, bruising the lower nature, if one adjusts himself whenever it is necessary for unity and the Gospel. He had to fight with himself. Three times he says, "I have been shipwrecked, and for 24 hours I was adrift on the ocean sea." He was a very sensible man. I think was more so than I am. Twice I ran a long way before Russian tanks to save my life. And even after the war when I had an easier life, if I was overworked or was worried during the night, I ran

again and again to save my life, In the morning I was tired. I can easily picture Paul, the worker-priest, who preached and worked day and night, when he fought for his life on the open sea for twenty-four hours when he was shipwrecked, and his three hours of sleep in a bed, if he had a bed. In a vision a man comes to him and asks: "Come to Macedonia and help us." You would have gone to a depth psychologist and he would have said that you were incapable of going to sea. But by the power of the Spirit Paul discovers the place of the "knock-out"--he was on sea the next day.

He had other fights as well. He had his temper, and since he was really a hero, a tremendous athlete, he could not understand his young assistant, John Marcus, who having been stoned only twice, spending a few days in jail, and after only several other inconveniences, left him. A soft fellow! So he went to mama! But the next year he returned to St. Paul for he had a great veneration for this hero. But St. Paul was hard and rough. In spite of the good words of his best friend, Barnabas, he sent him away. Any other man would have proved during his whole life that he was right. But not St. Paul; he felt John Marcus had missed a knock-out, that he himself had received a blow. So he wrote to Timothy: "Bring my dear Marcus. I need his help so much." And several times he recommended him as a good apostle and preacher.

He had to fight once more against the pursuits of his lower nature after the great activity of collecting thousands of dollars in the poor communities of Greece and bringing them to the diocese of Jerusalem. And perhaps he had imagined that they would make him a Right and Very Reverend Monsignor! That would have brought some advantages. That would have been a proof from the elders. But it was not like that. They received him and were happy to have the gifts, but they immediately called him and said: "Paul, you are suspected of situation-ethics! Your position with the law is not completely correct. But you now have an opportunity to show that you are of good will. There are some men here who have begun some penances and someone must pay for them. You have the money; we saw it. (Cf. Acts. 21). What would we have done? how would we be on fire with rage! But Paul did not just resign to not becoming a monsignor; he accepted the penances and paid for them from the few cents he had as a worker priest. That is the athlete of the Lord. That is what mortification means, not mere routine. There are exercises, indeed, but mortification must touch life.

Meditation XVIII

THE SACRAMENTS AND MORTIFICATION (2)

"On one occasion he was praying all by himself. Only the disciples were with him. He then put this question to them: 'Who do the people say I am?' 'John the Baptist', they answered; 'but others say, Elias; still others, one of the old prophets has come back to life.' 'But you,' he said to them, 'who do you say I am?' Then Peter spoke up and said: 'The Anointed of God.' He sternly enjoined them, however, not to tell this to anyone, adding: 'The Son of Man has yet to suffer much, be rejected by the elders, high priests, and Scribes, put to death, and on the third day rise again.'

The following he addressed to all: 'If anyone wants to be my follower, he must renounce himself and shoulder his cross day by day; then he may be a follower of mine. He who is bent on saving his life must part with it anyway; but he who freely parts with his life for my sake will save it in the end. Really, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world once he had paid the price and thrown his own self away?'

Luke 9:18-26

As you see from this Gospel the Lord didn't even permit His disciples to make known to others that He was the Anointed One before it was visible that He fulfilled His high priestly vocation by suffering and by rising. It is observed also, as tradition emphasizes, that it is not only a question for some disciples, for some special situation in life, but taking up one's cross day by day is the vocation of all. We must give up our desire to preserve ourselves and to surrender ourselves to God and neighbor, to follow the Lord in his ministry of death. All the sacraments teach us this, and if we would deeply understand the liturgy and live it, we would understand ever more the meaning of mortification and the putting to death of the pursuits of the lower nature.

Our previous meditation considered the teaching on mortification of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation. How does the sacrament of penance teach us mortification? St. Albert and St. Thomas teach that by the sacrament of penance we enter in a new way into that "configuratio" to the death of Christ, that transformation into the mystery of Christ's satisfaction. One who has received sincerely this sacrament must be ready to join Christ in this satisfaction. The Council of Trent is quite explicit on this point. Some reformers asserted that it is an insult to the satisfaction offered by Christ when the Church still demands penance. Trent taught explicitly that

it is precisely because of the honor of the suffering of Christ that we join ourselves to His satisfaction. Some confess their sins but are not converted because they are not prepared to do penance. Conversion, that is, "metanoia" is certainly more than doing penance; it is a change of one's heart and mind, a surrendering of oneself to Christ. But since the situation of the sons of Adam demands a fight against sin on our part, the fruit of conversion, as Christ says, is penance. I repeat, and I think it most important, that we make a special purpose for each confession. In this way we become systematic in correcting ourselves--always in view of the New Law. Sometimes we ought to make as our special purpose the penance that Pope John did as a seminarian. He resolved to make two visits daily to the Blessed Sacrament. If he found he neglected these visits he noted his omission in his diary at the end of the week. If at the end of the following week he still persisted in this omission, then until noon he would eat nothing and in the afternoon he would spend two hours before the Blessed Sacrament in meditation. That is being systematic; and Pope John did not lose his humor by extending such energy.

I will propose to you here some special forms of penance which may help you. To strong smokers, cut down immediately to 15 cigarettes, then slowly taper down. In another form, send the same amount of money to the missions that is spent on cigarettes. Or if you prefer, make this resolution: if I smoke more than 15 cigarettes then the next day nothing, absolutely nothing. If failure is repeated because of self-indulgence, then next time no smoking for a whole week. Finally one will be a non-smoker. Some people have a strong will and do not smoke more than 8 cigarettes a day. These men I admire because they are really free. For those with a tendency toward impatience, consider three kinds. For a smaller explosion, a daily fasting or giving a certain sum of money to the missions. For a middle explosion, at least the way of the cross once and at least a renouncement of that which he would spend in the area of \$2.00. For a big explosion, penances can be made accordingly. One can renounce alcohol. Two years ago I gave a conference to the Sobrietas Internationales, at which I heard the statistics of priest drinkers in America and Canada. It was a strong shock for me and I didn't believe them at first. But these men proved that the figures were accurate. The statistics pointed out the shocking number of priests who drink in such a way that they need special treatment as pathological cases. Here we need help. If you come to a pastor who has the habit or falls into this situation, then renounce alcohol but without any words. Other confreres must also help him. If out eating with him, it would be a great act of charity for you to renounce alcohol knowing he will fall if you drink.

The sacrament of the Eucharist teaches us mortification. Our life cannot be consecrated to Christ if we do not offer everything at the Offertory. We must associate ourselves continually to the death of Christ if we wish to share as priests His work of redemption. A priest cannot live a healthy life, mentally and psychologically, if he celebrates the mystery of the death of Christ and yet adjusts

himself to the easy life of the higher social classes. Perhaps this explains why a number of priests need the treatment of depth psychology. Generally priests come from the best families. As priests they feel called to sanctity. Yet sometimes they retain the notion that those on a lower social level are healthy in an animalistic sense. But one who has learned theology and one who lives the life of our Lord celebrating the mysteries of Christ cannot be mentally balanced if he doesn't sincerely try to put to death all the base pursuits of the lower nature.

Mortification is demanded by the sacrament of Holy Orders. Christ is "sacerdos et hostia", and that is also our vocation as priests. The liturgy of this sacrament makes quite clear that it demands mortification. The bishop with great emphasis lays hands upon us saying: "agnoscitur quod agitur, imitamini quod tractatis, quatenus mortis Domini mysterium celebrantes mortificare membra vestra ab vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis." Those who are in the most intimate way connected with the High Priest must regard the Eucharist as their rule of faith. For the simple faithful mortification is a high task, but for those who are priests, mortification must be felt even more.

Our priestly life can be filled with joy. I say this sincerely. People bring us so much love and gratitude, and there are days when we really feel the blessing of God on our work. But we also need a participation in the sorrow of the Lord. One of his mortifications is bearing the burden of all. By a modest style of life, by great service, and by our acceptance of penance and satisfaction we fight for immortal souls. At times there is no hope of obtaining an extraordinary grace for a soul unless we share the sorrow of the Lord. During the past 15-20 years, against my will, I've had to care for fallen-away priests. Without much prayer and much sacrifice from generous souls, I say sincerely we have little hope. But if there is much prayer and sacrifice, we can hope for everything. About 10 years ago I approached Professor Fenton. He had been professor of dogma and twice rector of a large seminary. However, because of a girl, he left the priesthood and became a Protestant. At his 70th birthday all his brothers celebrated him as a second Luther. However, he never wrote one word as a Protestant against veneration to the Blessed Mother. Very much urged by others I dared to approach him. His first words to me were: "Why during 40 years did no priest ever come to me?" He had been avoided by his Catholic brothers! He was greatly excited when I left him. I noticed that on his desk the Codex of Canon Law was opened to the listings of penances for married priests. I prayed, but not trusting in my poor prayers I obtained help. One of my good souls for whom I was spiritual director and who had to endure prolonged pain offered all her suffering that God would save his soul. She died after suffering two months and the very next day Fenton called a priest and received extreme unction and died a Catholic. I could relate other experiences. It is the experience so clearly expressed in Holy Scripture. The Apostles asked Christ: "Why could we not

cast out this demon?" The Lord taught them that there was no other means but by prayer and by fasting; fasting representing all kinds of mortification. A priest who is mortified can use the power of exorcism and we do have such a power! If we are truly mortified we will feel that our power is greater than that of the devil's. A priest who is without mortification is a laughing stock for the devil, and he will make sport of him.

The sacrament of marriage teaches us mortification. In the liturgy of the sacrament, two people are promising fidelity for good days and bad days, the poor and the rich days, the healthy and the sick days. Those called to celibacy for the kingdom of God must not be separated in the spirit of mortification from married couples. As priests and celibates we must teach them mortification and sacrifice, fidelity through bodily mortification. Like Christ we must be teachers by our very own life.

Finally, there is the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. Trent teaches that the sacrament of the anointing of the sick is not only a fulfillment of the sacrament of penance. The sacrament is seen rather as the fulfillment of a whole life of continual conversion and mortification (D970). Our death will be the great hour of our life if we were disciples of Christ in mortification.

Today being Good Friday, I feel God gives all of us the grace to make this meditation with an upright conscience. Mortification is a great mystery of salvation. It is infinitely more than the Stoic virtue of Buddhist self-denial. Mortification means to be a sharer of the mystery of salvation which is the death and resurrection of the Lord. If one believes the Good Tidings of the death and resurrection of Christ and if he realizes his vocation to sanctity, then he will also embrace mortification. It is clear that our lower nature (and it still exists) is quite opposed to the word "mortificatio" and still more to its reality. But we have faith! Only if our faith grows will we embrace the virtual force of the power of the Holy Spirit, mortification, just as Paul became such a great apostle through mortification.

Mortification must be docile and spontaneous. Divine providence does send us some successes which we accept. Everyone feels to some extent the wounds of Adam, and thus one must accept his limitations. He must further accept that idiosyncrasy of his character must be ridiculous and look upon it with humor. He can only have such a humor if he accepts it from the Lord. We need docility to bring those sacrifices needed for the unity and the fulfillment of the great commandment of love. We need spontaneity and we must be watchful. If one is not spontaneous and does not find good occasion for mortification, he does not understand the divine teaching.

I return to the smokers but only because smoking is a symptom. Certainly, it isn't the worse thing in the world. But for a priest to sacrifice 5 years of his life because of smoking is bad enough. Pope Pius XII had worried about religious priests who smoked too much. Thus, he wrote on his own personal initiative a letter to the superior-generals of religious orders admonishing them concerning smoking. In those congregations where the rule itself requires this personal sacrifice the superiors should insist forcefully on this renouncement. In congregations having no rule against smoking the superiors should be very conscious of their duty to educate their religious in temperance. One young priest in such a congregation approached his superior and said: "What then would I have? Then I must masturbate." I inquired of the superior what he responded to this young priest. He said: "Nothing!" I said to him that I would have sent the young priest to a psychiatrist and if he said that he was normal, then I would have suspended him from celebrating the sacrifice of the Mass until he understood that sacrifice is a source of joy. If a man is in such a situation, then we must help him to arrive at an understanding of what really is the Christian faith.

Our examination of conscience should consider if we are really near the freedom of the children of God. Is our life joyful? If our life is not joyful but we strongly feel the burden of the Lord, then we detect the sign that our life is not mortified. St. Francis could sing the chant of the sun because he had chosen poverty and mortification as his sister. God needs joyful priests! God needs joyful Christians! But this joy is not the superficial joy of the world, but the joy of the Gospel, that is, the joy of the glory of the Resurrection. Yet, there is a condition--and it is not a small condition--to die to oneself! Amen.

Meditation XIX

THE SACRAMENTS AND THE NEW LAW

"This is what glorifies my Father -- your bearing abundant fruit and thus proving yourselves my disciples. Just as the Father loves me, so I love you. Be sure to hold my love. If you treasure my commandments, you will hold my love, just as I treasure my Father's commandments and thus secure his love. I have told you this, that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be perfect.

This is my commandment: love one another as I loved you. No one can give a greater proof of his love than by laying down his life for his friends. You are my friends, provided you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants for a servant is not in his master's confidence. But I have called you friends, because I have made known to you all that I have heard from my Father. Not that you chose me; no, I have chosen you, and the task I imposed upon you is to go forward steadfastly in bearing fruit; and your fruit is to be lasting. Thus the Father will grant you any petition you may present to him in my name. This is all I command you: love one another."

With the proclamation of the New Law in the Cenacle and with the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the prophecy of the prophet Jeremias is fulfilled: "Behold days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Juda; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day I took them by hand to lead them out of the land of slavery, for they did not abide by my covenant and I no longer regarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days, says the Lord. I will put my law into their minds and upon their hearts. I will be their God and they shall be my people." It is by the New Law, the Law of the Spirit who is the gift of love, that the Lord fulfills this prophecy, giving us His own Spirit. The fulness of the Law, says St. Paul, is love of neighbor. By love of neighbor we prove ourselves disciples of Christ and manifest to the world that we are loved by the Heavenly Father in Jesus Christ and that we abide in His love. Because God is love, every happening of His divine providence teaches us this law of His. As love, He

proclaims this glory of His love in all that He says and does. He proclaims this law of His inmost being in us, whom He has made in his image and likeness. But He teaches this law of love most fully through Christ, Who is the great sacrament, the great reality; through Christ who fulfilled His law by dying.

He continues to teach us this law through His Church. She is a great sign of His love. As the Constitution prepared for the next session makes very clear, the Church is "caritatis and unitatis sacramentum", the great, efficacious sign of charity and unity. The Church celebrates her covenant of unity with Christ in the liturgy, that is, in and around the Eucharist and the other sacraments. So now at the end of this retreat we are going to try to grasp the whole picture of how our Lord teaches us, His friends, the fulness of the law--fraternal charity.

In baptism we become members of Christ and members of one another. We prove to be members of Christ and to abide in Him if we love one another. St. Augustine says it in his own wonderful way, "Non potest separare delectio." You cannot love the Heavenly Father without loving His Son. If you love the Son, you love the Father. And you cannot love the Son of God if you do not love your brother. And by loving your neighbor you show that you love the Lord Himself. Members of the Mystical Body, we are members of one another. This is no command; this is an ontological solidarity. This is our new being. Christ proclaims our membership in His Mystical Body within our very hearts. The grace of baptism at one and the same time both proclaims and urges us to fulfill Christ's great command: "Love one another as I have loved you." This is a saving love because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, abides in us. We are baptized into His name Jesus, Saviour, and saving love. Our love of neighbor then is no longer egoistic, nor possessive, but rather helps him to grow in the love of Christ. We are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. This mystery of Trinity abides in us. Our lives are destined to celebrate that love the Father celebrates with his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. But our lives will celebrate this love only if we remain in His love, only if we are within His family, the family of the children of God. By fraternal love alone can we associate ourselves with the eternal celebration of the triune love of God. Those who are baptized are true disciples of Christ who manifest the love of God to the world in the time between Pentecost and Christ's second coming.

St. Augustine went still further and said that we Christians are a sacrament for the salvation of the world. He asked, "How could the pagans be saved if we hid the sacrament of Baptism and of the Eucharist; how could they be saved if they do not know these sacrament." He explained that we who are baptized and who celebrate the Eucharist are a sacrament for the pagans by our living what baptism gives us and by living the meaning of the Eucharist. We show them the love of God will save them and bring

them to faith. He compared that hidden part of the cross, which though hidden bears none the less that visible part of the cross, to the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. Both are hidden from view to the pagans, but they bear the entire visible part of the Christian life which everyone sees. As sharers in Christ's love through baptism and the Eucharist we are the witnesses of the triune love of God revealed to us in Him.

What does the sacrament of confirmation teach us about fraternal love? It is a tremendous teaching, if we but read the Scripture wherever it speaks of the Holy Spirit, of His power, of His wisdom, and of how He purifies the hearts of men. Then we will know what confirmation means to teach. It teaches us that our love of neighbor is vile, is the force of the Holy Spirit, and that we need the gifts of the Spirit to purify our too natural love that is so often mixed with the base pursuits of our lower nature. We have to implore the gifts of the Spirit continuously and to open our eyes, ears and hearts to His teaching.

We need the holy fear of God for no love is good if our neighbor does not learn to fear God from it; it is nothing if it allows him to offend God, to rebuke, and to refuse His gifts of love. We need this holy fear of God to purify our love. In a mission, a lady who had been educated in college by sisters, asked me once very humbly and urgently to give her absolution and admit her to communion in spite of the fact that she was living in concubinage. I explained to her in charity that I could not do that unless she would inquire into making the marriage valid. But she explained to me that this was out of the question because she did not want to marry him for life. I suggested that leaving him. But that too was out of the question she explained. "Father", she said, "I love him too much to do that." Now it would be wrong to say that there wasn't goodness in this person who was sacrificing part of her life for this man. But it was a love not yet purified in the fire of the Holy Spirit. One of the great themes of the theology of the history of mankind presented by Augustine underlines the time between Christ's first and second coming as a time when God separates the love of men. Love is at work everywhere, for even the devil cannot totally deny that God is love. There is one love of self that can hate both God and neighbor, and there is another love of self that loves God and neighbor more and more to the point where it forgets itself. There continues to exist a great mixture of both of these two cities and of these two loves within us. Augustine shows us that in the time between Pentecost and the second coming of the Lord the Holy Spirit is purifying our love and separating those lovers of self who forget God and the needs of their neighbor from those who find their true self in loving God and their neighbor. All of us must implore the Holy Spirit to strengthen us in this love and to purify it. When the Spirit so purifies our love we will understand the meaning of the text of the Canticle of Canticles: "Yes, love is a fire, no water is available to quench it; not floods to drown it; for love of man one will give up all that he has in this world and think nothing of his love." Or as Saint Paul says

in the great song of love in the New Testament, "I may dole out all I possess, or give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love, it is nothing." (I Corinthians 13). Paul speaks clearly here of a love that is purified; a love that bears the name of the Saviour; an unselfish love. Love is patient, love is kind, and envies no one. Love is never boastful, not conceited, not rude, never selfish. There is no limit to its faith, and hope and its endurance. Love will never come to an end.

Just let me explain in a few words that there is no limits to its faith, its hope and its endurance. If we love one another in a love purified by the Holy Spirit then there will be no limits to its faith. Then we will recognize all the more that our neighbor is a son of God, a brother in Jesus Christ, to whom we will pay the deepest respect, even though the image of Christ is not yet totally visible. Brother Albert, a man like St. Francis and one of the great men of our century, lost one of his legs as he fought for the liberty of Poland. He was a famous painter who found the only thing of interest for him in painting was the image of Christ. This image he found in the poor and the most abandoned. He received all those who were considered criminals into his home. Among them were thieves because they were not loved. But this was not all. He went still further, going to live with them in Krakow where the police even didn't have the courage to enter. He made a contract with the mayor of the city not to send the police in after him but to trust him. He came to them not with a moralism but went among them to help them find some joy. He provided them with better food and with the life and warmth of a good heart. From among these thieves and murderers he won his first brothers with whom he was to found a congregation. At one time he received an inheritance from a good soul to build a better home. One of his friends knew this, broke Brother Albert's artificial leg, and took the money away from the others. After two years he returned. Albert embraced him saying "I knew, dear brother, that you would come back to me." This is what it means for love to have no limit to its faith, no limit therefore to its hope.

You will make this same experience, dear brothers, if you open yourself to the law of the Spirit and allow the Spirit to purify your hearts. You will experience yourselves that there is no limit to your love's hope in your pastoral tasks. I must confess that I have not always had this love, but at times God allowed the experience to realize this lack during and after the war. We began preaching missions in dancing halls from 1946-1947 in Protestant areas where until that time no Catholics were found. In the first villages where I preached, (we had 10 missionaries preaching in some 130 towns) the pastor was a poor fellow. Twice we tried to drop in to visit hopeless people. We found there three generous souls who helped us to clean up the dancing hall and find the Catholics in the area. There were two good old girls who accompanied my visitation to these hopeless people. "They are Catholics," they

would say to me, "but Father, don't visit them." It was known that they were refugess and it would be even more shameful were it known that they were Catholics as well. But I mentioned: "I will visit them now, but since you are gentler, you visit them next." At the end of the mission all those whom I was averted not to bother with, confessed and were filled with joy at having shared in the mission. At the next village on Sunday I had five hearers of the word of God; one an old school teacher. During the following week he helped me find the Catholics of the village. He was a very nice man and the patience he showed in accompanying me was tremendous. Toward the end, at one particular place, he said that there would be Catholics inside, but he had some honor. He wouldn't go in. "She is a girl for the Americans," he said, "a mother of five or six children. She's only good for American soldiers. I will not go in." I explained to him: "You're old. It's not shameful for you." Finally he accompanied me. When we came out he said: "You're a young man. Next time listen to an old man!" He said this because we had received a tremendous tongue lashing. I went on to explain to him that we did not come at the right moment. We would pray and try once more. He was disappointed and replied: "You are a stupid man, Father!" But I returned anyway and found the girl alone with her children. She too had some honor. "You are kind with me" she said, "so I'll come to one of your sermons." She came, and the next week when I preached in the next town six miles away she was at Mass every evening having had to walk at least 10 miles. When I returned the following year the school teacher eulogized this good mother and told me how well her children were behaving at school.

Why then should we not hope for the best? She sold her body only because she did not want here children to die. Why should we despise her and others like her? Why should we not hope everything? There is only one thing that can open up souls--LOVE! But we will have this power only if our love is purified. Our love will reveal itself as purified if we are ready to sacrifice, that is, if it knows no limit in giving itself.

Confirmation is the great sacrament of love because the Holy Spirit, Who anointed Christ with the gift of Himself, has anointed us with that self same gift of Himself.

What does the Eucharist teach us of love? It is not easy to explain this in a few words. We have to live this mystery through a life time. Then we will discover more deeply what is its meaning. "Love one another as I have loved you." This was proclaimed in the Cenacle in the Eucharist itself wherein the Lord gives Himself to us, gives us that Body for all brethren. If we abide in the Lord, how could we then not be united with our brethren. Once more this great sacrifice and sacrament tells us that we cannot love our friends if we do not, as Christ did, spend our time, spend our health, spend our life for others. Love is unselfish. One cannot be united with the Lord and abide in Him if one does not want to love his neighbor with all his power, his strength, his heart; and especially if he does not

love those who are the poorest and the most abandoned.

The sacrament of penance also teaches us what love of neighbor means. "Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us." In this sacrament we encounter that joyful experience so necessary for us poor sinners that the Lord is patient and full of forgiveness. In like manner we cannot love our neighbor if we are not patient and full of forgiveness, if we do not forgive wholeheartedly. Once I heard an old priest remind his confreres again and again of the injustice the Vicar-General committed against him. Finally, when he was alone I asked him: "Do you not forgive? You pray everyday, 'forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us.'" "I forgive! I do!" he said, "but I never forget!" He forgets neither himself nor the injustice of others and so proves he does not forgive. If he had forgiven, there would not be such an open wound. Would he forget the bitterness? Forget it in a great patient love? It was not so clear. I made a longer visit with him. After a while he came to admit that perhaps the Vicar-General was not wrong as he thought.

Sometimes at the outset we labor under the illusion that we are loving our enemies, only to find later that the enemies are actually our best friends. I've had several cases. Once I was telephoned by a priest about 800 miles away. He said: "You are a moralist. You must help me. I have a process against my Vicar-General." I said: "Please let me come to see you anyhow." He traveled the long distance and after two hours he began to doubt that the Vicar-General was totally wrong and that he was totally right. As it turned out he was totally wrong and the Vicar totally right. Why then was he so convinced? Because when he began to explain the injustice he had to suffer, all his confreres said to him: "Don't take it, let me feel it", instead of helping him to understand the way a priest should act.

The love taught us by the sacrament of penance must help us and others understand that we are at times wrong, or, at least, that we are not totally right. God does not forgive us if we do not acknowledge we are sinners and praise Him. "The law of the Lord is holy, just and good." We must help others to make the right critique not only of others but of themselves.

How does the sacrament of Holy Orders teach us the great commandment of love? Take a look at the liturgy and you will see that the whole liturgy of this sacrament is one teaching the law of Christ, the law of fraternal love. "In visceribus eorum spiritum sanctitatis." This spirit renewed in our hearts is the love of God. The bishop tells us that "vestis sacerdotalis" is nothing else than charity. The people of God will know we are priests of the Lord through our love. The bishop also implores upon us the blessing of God in the fulness of the Spirit: "That they may meditate on your law day and night and imitate that which they are cele-

brating". The priest must meditate day and night on the love of our Lord, on His law, to be able to see all things, not just the ten commandments but all tasks, in the light of the love of our Lord; to be able to see this inmost power that is given us to love one another with Christ's own love.

What does marriage teach us future priests about love? Marriage is a covenant of love in blood, a love that must make sacrifices. The knowing of one another in conjugal intercourse reveals one another's egoism. There is no hope for marriage if one is an egoist. But if they strive towards sanctity with the grace of the sacrament, they will be able to help one another to that blissful experience of how good God must be. Each will see how good God's love is if the other's love is so good. As priests we have the vocation to bring this experience not only to one person but to all people. How blissful must be the love of God if His servants and friends are so patient and so kind! This love hopes everything.

We come finally to the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. There is no greater love than one who gives his life for his friends. Christ has fulfilled what he taught and accomplished during His whole life by His death on the cross. He fulfilled that one law of His covenant, love of neighbor. The splendor and glory of Christ is the eternal glory of giving oneself, one's life, for one's friends. We shall celebrate our death as we offer the pains of our sickness, as we offer everything in the final act of our life for our brothers. We daily in a strong love, in a love purified by the fire of the Holy Spirit.

Our life is destined, dear brother, to be a great song, a great melody of fraternal love. It is in the song of the liturgy and in the light of that we will hear the voice of God and see the signs of His love in all things. All things will remind us that there is no greater reality on earth than love, but a love that is of Christ. All things will teach us how great it is to abide in the Lord, to have the love of God work through us, to give us the experience of His saving love to mankind! Amen.

QUESTION CONFERENCES

1. With the frequent reception of the sacrament of penance, it becomes difficult to retain the notion of God's action first and ours secondarily, i.e., it is difficult to practically apply this notion in weekly confession. Could you give us a few ideas on how to retain this notion in weekly confession?

It becomes a problem if weekly confession is imposed on all without exception and without regard to spiritual development. As far as I can determine in Europe, there are many pious priests who make a weekly confession. More numerous perhaps are those priests who confess twice a month. There are still other good priests, who confess once a month (the most numerous). I have the impression that priests who do not confess at least once a month are generally marked as superficial or as very good Pharisees in being convinced they do not need confession. Once a year they feel forgiven from all small weaknesses.

It is good if we make our weekly confession with a deep spiritual faith and make some progress in our spiritual life. There is at least one epoch in our life when we feel very strongly the necessity of weekly confession, but not because we are falling into mortal sins. This time is called by spiritual theology the "purificatio", when God gives us a very strong feeling for the necessity of continuous purification and when we feel with great sadness how far we are from Christian holiness. There is no problem at this period in making a good confession.

As soon as God offers His grace, one must make an act of sorrow with confidence after a fault. Fault here is used in its theological meaning, namely: that one could have been aware, or was aware that what he was considering doing would not please God and yet he rejected for nothing this grace of God; that one was superficial and did not watch the "chaïros--time", i.e., the present grace of God and those important occasions to do good for the community or one's neighbor. We should try to make our act of contrition in the evening, then we have no problem with our confession.

Great saints during that period of transition from purification to the unity of God made great efforts in invoking, after any fault, an act of contrition. Often they went to confession. If one feels that weekly confession does not mean much to him, it is a sign that he does not realize how much he needs continuous conversion. Secondly, his faith is weak; he is more a man of routine than a man of living faith.

But there are times when there is reason not to confess every week, especially if you note that the confessor has difficulty spending time with everyone--everyone is just gotten in and heard rapidly. Also I am in favor of not imposing weekly con-

fession for the religious sisters. The possibility should be given and advised, but not commanded. For a parish priest with a good distance between his confessor and himself, there is the same problem. I would recommend to choose a good friend. Confession should be done normally to one's best friend, of course, conceiving friendship not as sentimentality but of the common striving toward God. This would be a rule for friendship: if one wouldn't want to confess to one's friend, then he is not yet really one's friend.

It is of great importance for the young priest from the seminary to choose a good confessor, who will be his father and friend and who will have patience with him and will courageously urge him to sanctity in a generous manner.

2. What about the language of confession? Has the Council said anything about the vernacular?

Do you confess in Latin? The formula, of course, will come in the vernacular. It's the most evident thing because we have already now the full possibility to use vernacular. The Good Message must be brought with understanding. Nobody even now forbids us to translate the formula into the vernacular and into the actuality of the one confessing. We must administer the sacrament in Latin as form, but at the same time you are interpreter. What the priest does after the form is for him to decide; he must interpret. We must not fall into formalism.

The formula should be said with such solemnity that the priest makes clear that a great thing is happening. In Easter confessions for those who do not come often or only after years and for workers, I generally translate it for they do not understand Latin. Cardinal Montini imposed it as a rule in Milan that no priest in his diocese receive the penitent with the Latin formula. He made it a law that it must be said in the vernacular: "May the Lord be in your heart and mouth that you may make your confession uprightly." It is important for those not coming often to address them in living language. You are free to do this because you are not obliged to say this formula, therefore you can use the vernacular. If you can omit it you can say it in the vernacular. At the present moment you must say absolution in Latin but you can translate it into the actuality of this man.

After the confession of sins I say: "I'm glad now to bring you in Christ's Name the Message 'Thy sins are forgiven'. The peace of the Lord be with you. Keep the joy of Christ in your heart, ego te absolvo...". I dared to ask the prelates on retreat at the Vatican when speaking on death, is it not a sin against the nature of the Church if the Good Tidings is brought to a sick man, to workers, to Africans, in Latin. I said: I dare to ask you in the face of my death and yours if you do not find that it is Christian gentleness to bring the anointing to the vernacular, not only to allow it but to command it. I saw that the reaction was good, so I'm optimistic.

3. Some of us are preparing to administer the sacrament of penance in the near future. What place should be given to material in such manuals as *Jone* for the administration of the sacrament?

Do you have a stove in your house to place these books? In the kitchen perhaps you have a fire to heat these books.

4. What relation is there between the sacrament of penance and spiritual direction?

Normally your confessor should be your spiritual director. But it may be that you have a spiritual director who is helpful, who knows you and can help you. Perhaps if one is a difficult case, and cannot explain it to a confessor who cannot answer the problem, then one has a different director, necessarily because of the circumstances. But the normal case remains.

5. After confession of sins, some priests offer advice on sins, others talk about some aspect of the Christian mystery? What do you think a priest should talk about in the confessional to the ordinary Catholic?

I return to my reply that I gave your friend that the work of the priest must be the translation of the Good Tidings into the actuality of this man. It is rather an escape if one takes the Sunday Gospel and had it prepared for everyone. If one does that, I would say to him, gather all your penitents and say now I will give you a talk on the Sunday Gospel. If you speak on the Gospel you must apply it to this particular man, that it speaks to this man in this situation. It is not necessary to apply it to a special sin but to the situation of this particular person. You must have feeling for him, have sorrow with him, help him, but help him by the sacramental message. Your message is nothing but the sacramental message. It must help him realize the meaning of his sins and the meaning of his encounter with the Lord. Sometimes the confessor is tired and cannot follow this in practice. Thus, my first answer is better-- to let the good nuns confess twice a month and then really help them celebrate the sacrament and not just be a machine of absolution. It should become life.

6. How do you help people if they are afraid of telling you serious sins? Especially young people, if you feel they are afraid?

You, especially as young priests, should be very respectful. By inquiring you become like the Inquisition. If you have instructed people, high school and college students etc., well-instructed on the sacrament, you should not follow the rules given by old moralists like an alphabet. Many rules of 17-18th

century moralists were concerned with Christians who could not read. Therefore, if they came to confession, the confessor had to ask them. But you cannot treat Americans as these Italians. But sometimes in the confessional, if you feel with the people, if you feel their hesitation, if they just give you some word that they wish to be helped; then you can help and encourage them to return to this point. But never can we omit the general rules of gentleness used in our society. As far as I know it would not be gentle to ask someone: "Have you committed sodomy, homosexuality, etc." You must gently ask if he would like to be helped. At Easter people came to me from different parishes, especially young boys and girls, whom I felt were forced to confession by their parents. You should tell them: "I know you have made a great effort already, and you have prayed for a good confessor. Would you like me to help you?" He may answer: I have said everything already, or, thank you I would like you to ask.

As for the sixth commandment, remember that there are nine others. On the Mount of the Beatitudes there were other things just as important. It makes a bad impression if priests always ask on the sixth commandment. It upsets people and makes them fearful. It makes them feel that priests are the incarnation of curiosity.

7. What do you personally request of people in the form of a penance? What is your opinion on penances which require the performance of Christian acts of charity?

A whole series of lectures would be needed to produce something like Irish penitentials. There the purpose was to reduce penances to stereotypes. There were 10 different kinds for murder, depending if the one murdered was only a slave, a boy, a girl (a boy is higher) etc. Very practical. For instance one of these libri penitenciales that the Irish brought into France and Germany (these books were always received in the wrong way) said: if a boy confesses masturbation, the priest immediately strikes him and then tells him to go on with your stupidity. It would not be a right penance. To impose the right penance one needs a knowledge of psychology, of the meaning of sin, and of its opposite, the meaning of virtue. For instance, the problem of masturbation. You must determine the reason or cause, often it is isolation. So you suggest gently if he would like as a penance to renew this resolution every morning "I will give joy to my parents today." In the evening make an act of contrition and next time come and tell me if you have brought joy to your neighbor. You tell me this first before you tell me about how you are doing with the sixth commandment.

It is a question of invention. I've spent much time on how to impose penances. Sometimes I have had good and sometimes bad results. For drinkers I tried to impose the penance that for the future everytime he drinks too much he pays the double price for

the beer or wine. But sometimes people told me, that's not possible Father, because when I'm drunk others pay for me. They are honest!

For the farm boys in one area I suggested as penance to do the farmwork on Sunday for there existed the bad habit among the youngsters of letting their mothers do this work on Sunday. I suggested doing it each Sunday until their next confession, but insisted that they did not tell their mothers it was a penance. Say to her, I find it nicer for me to do it. I heard it said in the whole area that the mothers were wondering and boasting how wonderful were their sons!

But it is important if you choose this kind of penance that you agree with the other parish priests in the area. It must be discussed first. I started alone. I had too many penitents, thus was not worried if I lost some to other priests, and it was a means of selection from those who were not serious. But never impose it transcendently. Ask if they would like such a penance.

During a mission retreat I worked on, we made an agreement that for those who already had a jubilee since their last confession we would not impose a rosary but simply receive them kindly and explain what it means "Shalom" -- the peace of the Lord--, and then ask, would you like to make another man as happy as you are. Tell others who have not confessed for a long time that you were kindly received and glad to have confessed. And we had good result. They were our best apostles! I heard it said on the streets: "I have brought you already four". Some returned and said I tried but my neighbor said he was not ready. In one case, it was Easter, I rose from the confessional after midnight and a man came to me and said: "Could you visit my neighbor, a sick man?" We had already visited him previously, and he had locked his door. "How did you do it?" I asked. He replied: "One came to him today who had confessed after 40 years and said: 'I had as many years as you and I'm glad I went'. And he said, 'could you do the same'?" I went to see him the next day and he told me that every day five of his friends came to him and told him that he should confess and five repeated my sermons. "I know them by heart, better than you Father", he said. His confession corresponds to the conversion of the community of salvation.

It's a long progress, you must know much: the situation in the area, the psychological willingness and readiness, the gentle expressions. But it is a great instrument of pastoral renewal.

8. We know, Father, that the penitent's fundamental motive is a sincere desire to strive for sanctity. Yet he comes to us and repeats over and over again the same sin. Can we say to him that as long as his fundamental attitude is right, that he can look on the faults of this kind as accidents more than anything else and receive the sacraments?

I think so. It is most important. I repeat the view of St. Augustine quoted by Trent "Deus impossibilia non iubet". There he does not mean that one can praise God and then do anything else. Man cannot rise as quickly to justice as he had fallen to sin. Augustine presents a wonderful picture of the merciful Samaritan and the man who falls into the hands of the robbers. When the Samaritan brought him to the inn he needed a long cure. Sometimes man has to make a long and patient effort to do what he cannot do yet but he prays. At the same time God accepts it. One embraces the whole law of Christ if he really uprightly does what he can and prays hard to do that which he cannot do. There are so many young people with the problem of masturbation and because they are not treated kindly, lose their faith and no longer believe God is love. An Italian boy asked me: "Father, how can you explain to me that God is love and yet not even for one week can I keep myself in His friendship and in the state of grace."

It is the same with married couples who have many children and the health of the mother is in danger. They are generous to God but they do not find the perfect control of their ideal. But they strive really to cultivate control of self and a more sincere and more generous love. If you see that they really have the best will as to the number of children and ~~strive~~ to control themselves ever more, you can encourage them that in as far as they have such a good will, make an act of sorrow after each weakness and go to communion, and next time in confession, say whether you have made any progress.

Only if we are morally sure that we have committed grave sin must we abstain from communion until the next confession. But if one has serious reasons to doubt in his own favor (and there are serious reasons if they have good will and they pray) and even if one does not have a perfect will at the present time yet one feels he did not do it deliberately but only through weakness and shows his good will by making an act of sorrow; here there are more than sufficient reasons to tell him: make an act of contrition and go to communion. I have the feeling that in this way confidence and joy in God is restored and they make greater progress.

9. Each Saturday afternoon our seminary enters into prayer through the sacrament of penance. Can you say a few words on the ecclesiastical aspect of the sacrament?

I recommend your reading the Pontificale Romanum. There is a wonderful rite of solemn celebration of the sacrament of penance. In this rite and in its prayers the ecclesial aspect of penance can be seen. There are two parts: the public exposition, where all the prayers express that the whole Church suffers with them. The bishop says, I am first to need the mercy of God, and let us pray that they may deeply feel the great injustice they've done to the Mystical Body of Christ and that after penance they may return as members fitted into the whole Body and may contribute to its growth. The second part is the public reconciliation, a tremendous expression of this solidarity. The bishop in this rite (it is still an official rite though not practiced) takes the penitents by hand and followed by others walks toward the altar. After confession of sins, the bishop intones: "You have together with them, now rejoice with them because they return to the Church as living members, as living for the edification of the whole Body." In a solemn manner he gives absolution.

It is a wonderful rite. The common rite, however, of the sacrament of penance when renewed will better express this communal aspect of conversion.

10. You've mentioned that the Gospel is the rule of life, the Sermon on the Mount, the Discourse at the Last Supper, etc. What about such counsels: "Do good to those who hurt you," etc. If we do not follow these can we sin?

You already made a falsification. You made a decision: you spoke of counsels. But Our Lord proclaimed this as his New Law with full authority. If one listens to these words and acts upon them he is like a man who builds his house on a solid foundation. If one does not act upon them he is like a foolish man. Everyone must sincerely try to fulfill them. All these commands are leading to the one: "Be perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect." St. Luke has the same meaning as that of the Mount: "Be merciful as the Heavenly Father is merciful." Especially is this fulfilled by loving those who are our neighbors. As God acts towards us, so must we act towards others. This is a command and proves if we are or are not Christians. It does not mean we have to be perfect, but we must strive. It is the expression of the New Law. Depending on our knowledge and understanding given by God these counsels oblige. We must make a deep act of contrition if God gave us the intelligence to realize them in such a situation-- to see the application-- yet we did not use this grace of God but took it for nothing. If one wishes to confess, not to a Rabbi but to a priest of the New Law, then one must follow the Sermon on the Mount. This is the basic question.

11. The subject matter of this retreat has been the New Law of Jesus Christ, the law of grace. Prayer and the sacraments have been at its center. My first question is how does the seminary rule fit into this structure; and secondly, how do you explain that the rule is the expression of this will of God when occasionally it seems to be contradictory to this New Law of Christ?

I could ask what do you mean by "occasionally" and by "the rule contradicts the law of the spirit". Of course, there is always a tension, but why not sincerely face this problem!

There is the tension between the ideal and the necessities of everyday life. This tension is even greater when those who wish and need a spiritual rule or guide are not yet spiritual men. Even St. Thomas says that men at times are to be led by the external rule more than it is convenient in itself because they have not yet grasped what it is to be spiritual.

Another unavoidable tension arises at times of transition. Our whole feeling of life is no longer the same as it was 30-40 years ago. Before the council many theologians, and especially the bishops, did not know they were allowed to think! They had the words of one talk of one pope, and from it made conclusions; but conclusions that were as simple as possible because the talk was clear. Thus they took one talk, one phrase of the pope and adhered to it mechanically no longer asking what was the meaning of it in the circumstances and time that it was written, what was its value. Many moralists refused adherence to the bull "Una Sancta", but at the time if you did not accept it they burned you. One person has told me: "I hope one day you will burn with Bruno." Today is a time of rapid transition. We all have experienced today the great fact in the Catholic Church that we are free to seek liberty and freedom. We have some clear outline of truth as guiding principles, but in many other things we are on the road towards truth if we confess the limitation of our certitude.

Now to return to the problem, what should be the rule of training in the seminary. The rule should make as visible as possible and as accessible to actual experience, that it prepares men who are witnesses of the law of liberty in a very particular way. We should be ruled by as few rules as possible, so that we can have the greatest freedom to respond to the pastoral need, to adjust ourselves to the hour of grace. But we must recognize also that we are only being prepared, i.e., we enter the seminary at 20 years of age but are not perfect men of liberty, perfect spiritual men.

Secondly, and perhaps it is a condition for the first, we must be educated to such a great solidarity that we can be allowed to have great liberty. Why solidarity? If we are not total social beings, if we have not learned to make the final decision

of conscience in the light of the law of love, in the light of solidarity, that is, ready to make a sacrifice for the common good, then we are not ready for liberty.

How does one make the synthesis? It is my personal opinion, soon to become the common opinion, that all these things must have a deeper outlook. Not only are there moral rules and great moral principles, but they must also be seen and lived within the realm of the liturgy where we are encountering the mystery of the death and the resurrection of the Lord. The heart of the seminary must be the liturgy. But as I have already expressed, it is necessary for us to be men of prayer, otherwise liturgy becomes collectivism. Liturgy must teach us how to pray, to sing and to pray in our heart. We must learn joy from the liturgy. We must not learn immobilism -- so my grandfather did it, so my father did it, thus I do it also. Liturgy is not something immobile. Liturgy must always be adjusted to different cultures and social classes. In the seminary we must learn to have before our eyes those whom we will we will serve. It is wrong to make the liturgy for ourselves as an upper social class or cultural level. We can make adjustments for our level but at the same time we must learn to celebrate liturgy in such a way that we are prepared to celebrate it for the average people, for those Negroes who will be Catholics in the next generation. To some extent, we are not yet Catholics if we do not have present before our eyes the working class, the new-middle class, the blue-collared workers. We must descend sometimes in our liturgy. On some days we can celebrate high mass but it is meaningful only for the highest cultured class. We must have present in our minds those poor ones!

Thus already in the seminary you should like a simpler liturgy, a more popular liturgy, those chants and songs which would touch the souls of people in the United States. I do not know yet how far one could go as to jazz in the liturgy (of course, the most noblest form). We should learn what is the way of feeling of colored people, their spiritual joy.

But all these things only work (I am returning to the theme) if all are striving together. When all have spiritual judgment, our life, through our needs and play, through our generosity, expresses and manifests to others what we have been celebrating. I see for instance your mission box. You feel that it would be more sensible to spend money for poor missions, to have visible contact and some patronage for a poor mission, and to have clear before your eyes: should I smoke 40 cigarettes today or be generous to these poor fellows. It must be a catholic spirit.

The danger is to view just a particular rule and not the whole spirit. If the spirit is good, then it will be easy to obtain the adjustment of the rule. But if you start with the single question of the rule, your superior must necessarily become

suspicious; as that rector of the seminary at Rome (not the North American College) because the students always started with complaints about the meals. The students try to bring in the new approach of liberty. They wish to have the seminary doors open late at night because there are concerts at night.

The Constitution on the Liturgy declares the liturgy as "inter disciplina principalis". That does not mean "besides the others", but all the disciplines must be permeated by liturgy. So the whole life of the seminary must have liturgy as its center and all things are to be judged by the liturgy, the mystery of the Word Incarnate. Then you will even find a deeper meaning for some rules which still are felt as a burden for one or two or twenty. These rules are necessary though as protective of the good spirit.

12. My question is concerned with the renewal of the liturgy and Marian devotions. What role should Marian and other popular devotions play in the life of the priest?

As for devotion to the Blessed Mother I shall show in one of our meditations how we have a privileged place for the Blessed Virgin in sacramental piety. Therefore you will forgive me if I let you wait.

As for devotion to the saints, I will say a few words. If we speak about devotion to the saints, even here, of course, the Blessed Virgin has a privileged place. The saints are those men and women who make visible to us what it means to follow Christ. In the discussions at the Council concerning "fontibus revelationis" the great spiritual leaders loudly proclaimed how wrong it would be to view revelation only in documents and books and in the formulations of theologians, even to view it from the documents of the magisterium. The truths of salvation are living in the Church and become visible for most people in the lives of the saints. St. Paul says: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ." The living example of the saints and the plenitude of Christ is visible in the saints. The Gospel will have more life for you and you will find deeper treasures in it, if you read good biographies of the saints. Look to the saints that God has given us at the present time, Pope John XXIII, for example.

Secondly, we view the veneration of the saints as a necessary expression of the mystery of unity. So overflowing is the Redemption of Christ that He makes us not only receptive but also sharers of His redeeming work. How could we not pray to the Lord for this wonderful "copiosa redemptio" to be found in the saints! Our whole spirituality is the spirit of a family. How could one not like those chosen members of the family of God if he likes God?

If we know that the Christian life on earth is love of neighbor, solidarity, how can we not trust in the solidarity of those who are seeing God face to face? Veneration of the saints takes on a deeper meaning if we see the whole Christian life as unity and as solidarity. One misunderstands liturgical piety if one wishes to diminish such veneration.

But we must abolish exaggerations. In the confessional at Rome often if I gave a penance of three "Our Fathers", the penitents would ask, "to whom"? I would say, the Heavenly Father. But they would say, "through whom"? I tell all my sins to St. Anthony but never to the Heavenly Father. Such devotion does great harm towards unity. It is a wrong attitude. Everything must have its place, and such devotions as these must be abolished. If people during Mass make a novena to St. Ignatius, another to St. Anthony, etc. and do not wish to be disturbed by the priest and by the community, that is not the "communio sanctorum", they are particular friendships!

13. In a conference, Father, you mentioned that if a seminarian felt he was being called by God to sanctify you would advise him to go ahead as a general principle. My question is: How do you distinguish this call to sanctity in the priesthood from the call of all men and of all Christians to become holy and strive towards sanctity

That is a very good question. We priests, if we are really priests, are privileged and are sent as witnesses of the vocation to the priesthood. It may be (I will make some distinctions) that one feels deeply that he is called to sanctify and that one wishes deeply and uprightly to respond to this call, but he feels he does not have the necessary qualities for the priestly life. A vocation always has as its foundation the gifts of God. The fundamental rule of our life is: "How can I best render to God the gifts He gave me?" If one does not have the necessary gifts, then the priesthood is impossible for him.

For instance, one does not have prudence. I have a friend who has the art of always making the wrong judgment. He does much harm in the confessional. Even people have told me that he does great harm because he lacks the instrument of wisdom and prudence. He may have prudence but he does not have the instrument of prudence. Concerning the Council he venerates those bishops who are in opposition to all the others. Such a man should not be ordained. He would already be a heavy burden and cross for a woman! But perhaps he may find a woman who has the same strange ideas, and then he is only a burden to the community. He is not called!

Another instance, if one really feels called to sanctity, but through a wrong sexual education or heritage, he is obsessed with sexual desires and questions, then it is better for him to marry than to burn. I am not speaking of normal difficulties, but abnormal ones; and I know I am not speaking here to scrupulous men. Even if he would like to be a priest he is not called. He will be unhappy and will give scandal. He feels called to sanctity but that does not mean necessarily to become a saintly priest. He could be a saintly husband if he finds a good wife who can help him. But if one has the troubles and difficulties of a normal life, with his body or with obedience for example, yet has a strong will towards sanctity, he will overcome these difficulties, or at least they will not do great harm to his life.

The basic condition still remains: if one does not have this basic striving for sanctity he is not called. He must be totally convinced of being called to sanctity or else he cannot be a witness for it. This is primary, but then other clarifications must enter into the question.

In case of doubt concerning one's past life, if it is evident over a certain time that one has converted himself and has realized his striving towards sanctity, despite great difficulties in the past, I would permit him to continue. But if he does not strive towards sanctity, and there are doubts as to the necessary gifts, I would absolutely discourage him. Return to another vocation and profession.

14. You've said, Father, don't go ahead if you do not feel called to sanctity. What do you mean by sanctity?

Sanctity is not exactly the same as perfection because sanctity already means cultural contact. In the next conference I will explain what is the sanctity of God and how one gives his life for the glory of God. By sanctity I do not mean that one is working from morning to evening to become perfect, using everything to become a perfect man, with the hope, if not to be adored, then at least to be highly esteemed and venerated by others. That is a Stoic concept of self-perfection. But sanctity means "be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect," to have kindness and a strong love for others who do not love you. "Be perfect" must be seen in the light of the eschatological fullness of grace. One believes in the superabundant grace of the Spirit and wishes to live up to the glory of the grace of God. St. Paul's life is the praise of the glory and kindness of the grace of God.

15. How are we to interpret Roman documents?

The "magisterium ecclesiae" is our immediate rule and not the wisdom of the theologians. The magisterium as explained in the new Constitution on the Church is the pope together with the bishops. This highest and supreme authority is visible in the Council: Peter with the college of bishops explaining doctrine and the pastoral rule of life. On the same high level as the infallible declaration of the council is the infallible declaration of a pope. At the present council it was stated that no infallible declarations will be made. The council will use all means of research, especially prayer and discussion, to explain doctrine authentically. If there is not a special text, making absolutely clear that it wishes to make an infallible judgment, then these doctrines may not only be better explained later, but also that some of the phrases of the text may be changed in a later council. If a council distinguishes between infallible judgments and doctrines proposed with the greatest care from the sources of revelation, it would be wrong if Christians would not distinguish in like manner. We must correspond to the magisterium and they make such a distinction.

We should be very grateful to Vatican Council I which gave a definition of infallibility. Before that some theological schools had wished to bind everyone to every declaration of a pope. So it was necessary that Vatican I make clear what are the boundaries for papal infallibility: ex cathedra, in the name of the whole Church, and obliging the whole Church very clearly. Already Vatican I explained that the pope does not make such declarations without the necessary research as to the faith and the tradition of the Church. Thus, practically considered, there is usually present the college in this way.

One must distinguish different degrees of solemnity. When the Pope insists repeatedly on a certain teaching, the certitude is greater than what he speaks only once and does not repeat it in spite of the fact that different opinions are in the Church.

The opinion of one bishop is not the opinion of the magisterium. I was told by one priest that his bishop had declared after the first session of the Council that he accepted the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy but would restrain it in his diocese. By this he loses his authority as he expresses a lack of solidarity with the whole Church. He should declare: "Your bishop is with the Church and will support wholeheartedly what the Council embraces. You can be assured that your bishop guarantees the magisterium of the Church." But if the Holy See proposes the dialogue Mass and the bishop forbids it, despite the fact that the Holy See has given permission, priests are not bound to obey their bishop. They are bound to obey the whole Catholic Church but they can temporarily wait to avoid greater trouble.

16. What about certain discourses of the Pope, say Pius XII's address in 1958 on marriage?

Here is a question of studying the whole magisterium. If you do not find full harmony among the discourses, then there are different legitimate opinions. I know a very influential man speaking of "Casti Connubii" who said that "causa et ratio matrimonii est amor conjugalis" is the most unfortunate statement made by a Pope. Yet at the same time he says the practical rules are absolutely binding. Here you see how a man chooses among the discourses and encyclicals, then openly says he is choosing and not attempting to take every word of every discourse. I do not accept other points also, because there is not yet a full harmony. But we must have the greatest respect for them and see the historical context, the meaning and boundaries of the discourse, and not transplant it to another meaning.

17. In one meditation you remarked that as soon as we realize we have missed a grace to make an act of contrition? How do we know it is really the Spirit of God giving me a grace to do such and such a thing or my own will?

This is to be seen to some extent by watchfulness. You see the situation. There is really a need of my neighbor and I could do it. You find there is no essential reason on the opposite side, just laziness or egoism or some apathetic feeling toward him. Thus on the one side there are clear attractive motives in accordance with the Gospel, they are gifts of God, and on the other side there are only lower motives, i.e., the reasons why I do not do it are coming from the lower nature and not from the Spirit. There is the objective situation, your possibilities, the needs of your neighbor, your feeling inside, you are awakened to these things; and on the other side there are less noble motives, i.e., you could not give a real noble motive on the spiritual level excusing yourself from performing the act.

If you have spiritual motives both for and against its performance and if you can sincerely say to the Lord "I choose not to do it because I wish to express my sincere love and obedience", then you need not do it. But you must do it if you feel that it would not be a real expression of upright friendship with Christ not to do it.

If there are doubts, you are always free to go in either direction, but always and only with the best intention of pleasing the Lord. If you do not wish to please the Lord by it, but simply wish to please your neighbor, say, for edification, then it is your own will only seeking self-glorification.

18. You spoke of the relation between the Eucharist and virginity and advised strongly visiting the Blessed Sacrament. There is a problem in the many presences of God, particularly the problem of the presence of Christ, his presence as Lord with the Father in glory, his presence in the Eucharist, his presence in us. I wonder if you could correlate the presence of Christ in us in love during the day and with our visit of the Eucharistic presence.

The humanity of the risen Lord is not substantially within us, but rather the power of His mystery of death and resurrection. He lives in us together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His Divinity. But the humanity of Christ, the human nature, the glorified body, is not within us. You know perhaps the recent discussions of Fr. Rahner who says that after we have received communion there no longer exists the sacramental presence but a presence that consists in a deeper unity of life Christ.

Your problem must be seen in the light of the "sign". If we can be sure of our good will, that is, our will to strive toward sanctity, and if we have received the Eucharist, we are sure that we are united to Christ in his divinity and have the life of the Trinity in us. But the presence of the Lord in the sacrament is a presence of his humanity. It is a special sign of His love, a sign of his Covenant. In heaven He is no longer a sacrament. The reality of God, His creative power, is everywhere. His special love is in all those sanctified. But there are efficacious signs of the nearness of God in general, but especially of Christ in His humanity, and this nearness of His Body and Soul is the Sacrament, the sign of the lasting covenant. If we believe, this sacrament is the great efficacious sign that deepens the reality of the Trinity in us.

But there is yet another sign that indicates Christ is near-- not directly in his humanity, but in his love-- and that sign is our neighbor. "Wherever two or three are gathered, I am there in their midst." It is a sign that Christ is there, not in his substantial humanity, but Christ as appealing us, as putting us to the test.

It would be an interesting meditation to speak of the presence of the Lord, one of the beautiful truths of our faith.

19. You mentioned that celibacy indicates "undivided love to the Lord".. Cannot married people live an undivided love of the Lord?

Naturally marriage has a dividing power because of the lower nature, because of the situation of fallen man. But through the sacrament of marriage they can live this undivided love. This sacrament has reference to the mystery of the virginal love of Christ to the Church. Thus married people can live an undivided

love to the Lord through their readiness to assimilate their love to this mystery and by looking to the example of those living celibacy for the kingdom of God. In Corinthians 7: 29, St. Paul explains that in this fullness of time (chairis--the full, urging, appointed time) the married can live in this undivided love through the grace of the sacrament. But it would not be possible for them to reach this ideal if there did not exist in the Church the witness of those who live in celibacy. Thus, these two realities or states are ordained to each other.

Priests can learn the spirit of sacrifice from married people I've been asked how I conceive poverty for the parish priest in the practical sphere. I would say, take the example of a father and mother of the lower middle-class who generously fulfill what the Church teaches and have say 6-7-8-9 children. Look to them and note the sacrifices they are bringing day and night; in this way you can easily determine the poverty that is in accordance with celibacy.

You Christian Workers in Munich noted for one year all that was asked concerning the clergy. Constantly recurring was the question why weren't the clergy able to marry. The workers themselves gave the answer by saying: "Then they would have to have children and make sacrifices, but they are too lazy for it." Here we note how strong our witness must be.

20. Speaking of celibacy, many of us have friends, even now, who are women. What are the signs that these friendships are or are not in order?

Your question is very good and I am happy that you posed the question in each form. It is quite different from that of six deacons in a seminary who posed the question. They talked day and night on how they must not be frustrated through celibacy and finally decided that it was only possible to reach perfection by having a nice girl friend. The rector of the seminary replied: "Go and perfect yourself in the world!" And they all left. The rector then came to me and asked me what he should do. I approved his solution.

This self-perfection is obsessional. It is egoistic to use a nice girl only as a means of self-perfection. It is not friendship in the Lord if we seek a friend for self-adoration or to break one's isolation. It means you are not open to all and to the Lord, that you are possessive. A real friendship is given by God, grows if one needs another when in distress and is proven as real if spiritual help is given each other.

Friendship with women can arise but it cannot be exclusive, not a friendship like a young betrothed couple. But it is in order if the friendship has its origin from high esteem and

from apostolic service. But even then the desire of the lower nature can arise just to use the other people for self-perfection, to have some nice feeling to enrich oneself. The need of breaking this friendship can arise as it did for Francis Salicius, known because of his relationship with a certain woman even though both were very old. Often it is not known that one day he wrote and said to her: "We must break it. I feel at the moment it could become an obstacle to my undivided love of the Lord." He imposed this sacrifice on her. We too must have this readiness. Friendship is not something we are seeking. A priest who is running to women whom he finds as good friends is lost because he will not find a real spiritual friendship. But certain circumstances require us to serve them. A personal example may illustrate this point. After this retreat I am going to visit a secular institute of women involved in social service. I serve these women but do not spend too much time there. Yet if one of them needs counsel, I make myself accessible every second or third year. All these virginal souls are good friends. They pray and make sacrifices for me and the Council. But they are good friends in this respect that they do not take too much time. They know I have other tasks to perform. Another sign of friendship consists in not wasting time. I know how great are their sacrifices, a sign of their friendship.

21. Could you tell us something of the possibilities given to the state of widowhood?

Already Clement speaks of them: "Through undivided love they became once again virgins." The founder of the Society of St. Paul (I have forgotten his name) has also found a special congregation for widows. As far as I have heard it works very well. They have also chosen celibacy for the Kingdom of God, accepting their situation and finding it a higher vocation to give themselves totally to the Lord in undivided love. But it is not easy for widows to keep chastity if they do not find the profound sense of faith.

22. Could you present to us some concrete ideas concerning poverty in the priesthood and in the laity?

In a welfare society, as today in Germany, all Christians have the problem of adjusting themselves so as not to lose the spirit of poverty. Welfare societies are also a danger for the spirituality of priests. But it is not only the poor nations that have problems of poverty. I feel that it is an important witness that, through all means of communication, the world can see one another and have an open outlook for the poor. And there are poor people even in the United States.

As priests we should not belong to the upper social class. This idea has been one of the strongest of the Council, that through historical reasons (Charlemagne, the German-Roman Emperors, etc.) bishops became princes of the states and priests had privileges that belonged to the upper social class, to the nobility. They live not only an evangelical state of life but also a social life with its privileges. A tremendous effort is needed to free us from this burden of European history and to return to simplicity. A great impression was made when the Pope stated at the Council that we all had to make a greater effort towards simplicity.

What about the priest? He must have the spirit of poverty and be really free from all things not needed for, say, a man like St. Francis (and we know how little he needed). One must be free to renounce smoking; one must be free to be content with simple meals. I do not think we have to go to Dior of Paris (the Roger Peet's of Paris) to have our clothes tailored. Our clothes can be tailored in a simple fashion. I am not aware of all the difficulties as to whether we should be equal to the white or the blue collar class. But we should not show that we belong to that middle class. I repeat, watch the ordinary worker gaining his 400 a month with 3-4-5-6- children. We should be an example to him.

You need a car but not in all parishes. It is not absolutely certain that all priests need one, many I know, very many, do need one. However, as a young assistant, you do not need the most expensive car. You need just a simple one. A businessman, if his business is running well, needs a big car. But your business is running with a simple car. I saw one of my friends in the United States, a young priest, who had a very expensive car. Not all, I know many who are very poor.

The question is one of watchfulness. But I must underline this, do not impose the same measure to your neighbor. It will be a real mortification if you try to impose it on your pastor. Make the sacrifice and don't cry over it. If the Lord gives you great graces, and calls you to be like St. Francis, then be like him, If not, then at least show a common poverty.

23. Would you indicate to, Father, how to make an examination of conscience according to the New Law?

We must ever and ever study the Sermon on the Mount and the Discourse at the Last Supper. One rule that should flow from such a meditation: look over your day and see if you were watchful, whether you missed an occasion to gain a knock-out to egoism, if there was a need of your neighbor, were you generous? There are two points. One is the Sermon on the Mount and the other is the 'time' (the "chairoi"). The basic question is am I

watchful or am I just a man of routine. If you do not find any occasions during the day to do good then something was wrong, you were sleeping! I have indicated other points in our meditations.

24. You have emphasized the seeking of the Kingdom of God first. Concerning the lay person, what is the role of his daily life in the Kingdom of God?

I do not think it is a strick secret that the text on the Constitution of the Church explains the role of the laity in the three-fold office of the Lord: His kingdom, His priesthood, and His office as prophet. The Lord Himself sought the kingdom of the Heavenly F^Ather by submitting H^Ims^Elf and not by doing His own wor and glory. He revealed Himself as servant of Yahweh seeking the kingdom of His Father. So also the laity, in their role as priests, must know we are sharers of the kingdom of God by serva-bility. Thirdly by the spirit of prophecy the laity must recogniz the richness of the present time, its possibilities, and also must recognize the passing shape of this world. The laity cannot es-tablish the kingdom of God above all areas of the world if they do not first submit themselves totally to Christ. Nothing counts un-less they have submitted themselves as Christ did to the Father so that God may be everything in all things. Secondly, the laity mus form and live such a life that expresses clearly that all things were created by God, inspired by the Word of God, and that every-thing is through and for Christ.

I cannot enter into particulars. In all fields of profession they must first be competent. That means they are listening to the word of creation, are trying to understand the meaning of all things in the eyes of God, are trying to understand what it means that God is with the evolution of culture, are trying to under-stand the meaning of things in this time between the power of the old world and the power of the Kingdom of God. We cannot present easy and simple solutions. It is not easy to explain a whole fiel in a few words for we must by systematic. The framework of the Church.

25. What is the place of community fasting in the Church today such as fasting rules, not eating meat on Friday, etc.? Some dioceses dispense their subjects, others do not. Often it appears only as routine and not true penance.

In past history such acts were universal acts of religion. As it was closed society, together Christians accomplished this act of remembrance of the suffering of the Lord. When they re-nounced good meals, it meant a real renouncement.

Today, the situation appears similar to that of a sister in a college who told a college girl about to marry a Protestant, that she prepare the best meals on Friday so that her husband will be content to observe the laws of Fast. Thus, he accepts it as routine. There should be some sacrifice.

The Church is very lenient as to fasting. Difficulties arise in making fasting a public veneration of God. We should, however, be content with all meals in the seminary. In your seminary you do not have American cooks. Yet one should never hear that meals are not as you would like them. Besides, your meals are excellent. But one can renounce what he likes, and can eat what he does not like, remembering always the demands of a proper diet. But there are so many sacrifices. I think on Friday it would be better not to smoke on travels and trips in Europe you have the right to eat meat on Friday if you do not find fish. There are general dispensations also when you are outside the seminary. If offered, eat it.

But we must find a new practice. I know many theologians propose specific questions as to legislation in this matter. Such legislation must inculcate true penance by some form. In our time it is of great importance that the Church preach the necessity of penance and that people learn to be spontaneous in its practice. I think there should be some legislation, but it should be reasonable and should be done in unity. One bishop should not impose fasting in one diocese, and another bishop dispense all, speaking only of the spirit of penance. The golden mean must be found. But if the Church extends such great kindness in this area, if she is so lenient as to her legislation, it is an appeal to us to offer other sacrifices.

What is the chief and positive aspect? It is not simply to mortify the body but to keep the body subjected to the spirit, or else the spirit is not subjected to God. There are so many mortifications that are not a danger to health. For instance, if we work hard we need a quantity of food. Do not make exaggerations here. But smoking or alcohol are not necessary for health. While traveling in Europe you could make some renuncements. You want to see and to learn about Europe. You can visit places where you will learn something rather than visit non-meaningful areas. But the question remains open as to how the Church will find a proper balance in the new legislation.

26. What is the place of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in today's liturgy?

It has a role. Of course, the Eucharistic Congress should never give the central role to Benediction. Here we already see great progress. The last congress at Munich gave the central place to the celebration of Mass, but yet did not suppress benediction. The legislation on the liturgy also does not suppress it.

The question is one of right balance. First place must always be given to the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice and meal; but room remains for visits to the Blessed Sacrament. A truly great place should be given to adoration of the Eucharist as continual gratitude to the everlasting covenant of love and as a Preparation for the next celebration of the Mass. Benediction is meaningful if we understand that the Eucharistic sacrifice is the first of all blessings in the Church. If we view all celebrations of the sacraments in reference to the Eucharistic sacrifice, i.e., they flow from it, then we will not expose the Eucharist during Mass. The Lord instituted the Eucharist not only as sacrifice and meal but as a sign of His everlasting covenant. He wishes to remain with us and wishes to remind us of this continual love. Thus, we should have a great reverence for benediction. The balance during the last centuries was lost; but today we are regaining it.

27. Could you present some thoughts on fraternal criticism?

As a final question it is a very good one. A meditation on the sacrament of confirmation is involved because this sacrament gives us the discretion of the Spirit. We have a right to criticize but it is the critique of spiritual men. It is always a loving criticism, a humble criticism, and it begins always with one-self. One can never render criticism to others and to the community if he is not critical of himself.

We must make a great effort to use this great gift of discretion of the Spirit which comes from the spiritually-renewed man. But there is also the lower nature, and we must be helped. It is quite normal that we indulge too much in the lower nature. Sometimes we consider as an inspiration of the Holy Spirit what is only of the lower nature (refer to previous questions for discernment of Spirit and lower nature). Sometimes we lack vigilance. Thus it is good to have a spiritual father to whom we are sincere. At certain times of the year we expose our situation to him and accept his counsel and correction.

We also must accept the correction of our superiors. Almost everywhere, you American seminarians, have superiors who are accessible and open to a dialogue with you. This is good, right and normal. But first you must accept some critique from the superior before you bring your critique to him, because you are all brothers. He represents the Heavenly Father and has the right to correct you and be critical of you. We cannot omit superiors.

But also it is a good thing to have at least one confrere who knows you will not be offended if he says to you that such and such a thing does not please him, i.e., if he corrects you. We should not correct one another if one has a certain fault but sees it clearly and is trying to correct himself. But if there is some tendency in us, we should have a good friend who openly tells

us of it. If it is a mutual friendship then both have arranged not to waste time on self-adoration or sentimentality with oneself, all such stupid things. A real friendship is a virile friendship. Clearly and as a natural matter of fact he tells you that what you did is not very pleasing. He is kind, pleasing, virile.

We must not be exclusive. If a more serious tendency exists in us, a dangerous inclination, often one does not believe it if only one friend tells him. But if four or five tell him he believes they are right and that he is not infallible. Especially if one is in great danger of following ways that seems signs of superficiality and going astray, everyone who has access to him to some extent or is liked by him should use every possibility to advert him to the danger. It is a great act of charity. Charity is not a sentiment. I find it a great help in our congregation as it is with many congregations that we have a common accusation on our faults against the rule. But most of the good religious I know have friends from whom they receive correction gratefully. I myself have friends who do it and from whom I ask it. It is necessary as we are not illuminated. Sometimes we need it and we believe it much more when told by another.

I will give only an analogy on how necessary it is. In my writing, when I am diligent, I achieve a good German style, for I wish to express myself well. At times I myself feel I am not careful. I have one or two good friends, sometimes lay people, who read my writings before publication and advert me that I am not careful in style in this particular article. I find it is the same article that I myself had some consciousness of its lack of style. But my conscience was not enough to make me act. The reprimand of others then makes me act. So it is with friendship, we need it. I think it would be very useful if you resolve the question of the meaning of friendship under this aspect, that you correct one another in a very virile and very natural yet at the same time supernatural way. This kills the spirit of bad criticism. If this criticism is a normal demonstration of love, then we need not the bad talk of other, useless criticism; we are virile and advert one another.

In a German factory at which I am spiritual director, there were many women who had the bad habit of speaking out against one another. One social worker, a very intelligent woman, proposed that in the future any one who speaks badly of others donates a certain sum to an old-age home. In this way they learned not to talk about others but to correct one another. After one year they had noble results in collection. They generously continued collecting for the same old-age home after the abuse had been corrected. Let us do something similar. It is very important in the seminary. I myself do not think you are very critical, that is, uselessly critical, but improvement is needed everywhere.

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Häring, B.

Meditations on the
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